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BIBLICAL THEOLOGY  
AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

*By the same author*

**THE CLUE TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

# BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

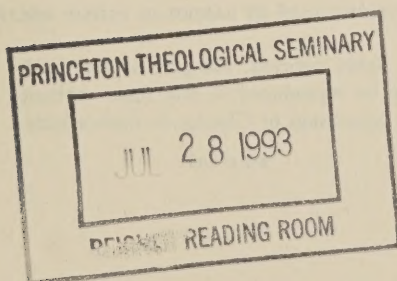
*by*

RANDOLPH CRUMP MILLER

THE CHARLES G. REISNER

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EDUCATIONAL READING ROOM  
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TO LILIAN B. T. HALLETT

*Mother-in-law extraordinary*





## PREFACE

THIS BOOK follows inevitably my *The Clue to Christian Education*. In that book I tried to work out the relevance of Christian theology in terms of the relationships experienced by various age-groups. I sought to state the organic relationship between content and method, between doctrine and the learning process, between theology and living as a Christian. Theology stands in the background as a guide to the relationship between the learner and God in the fellowship of the Church.

In this book, the same investigation is moved to the field of *Biblical* theology. Of course, all Christian theology is based on the Bible, but I have been concerned that the Bible itself illuminate the relationships of daily living in terms of the resources of the Gospel. If I was right in *The Clue* that theology can be taught in terms of relationships at any age, then perhaps the Bible as a record of the mighty acts of God in history can be taught in the same way.

In some experimental lectures along this line, I spoke of the five acts of redemption as creation, law and order, the Savior, the Spirit and the Church, and the Judgment. Someone, whose name I do not know, asked why I didn't make it much simpler: Creation, Covenant, Christ, Church, and Consummation, and then he handed me Bernhard Anderson's *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* and said, "Here's your speech!" I accepted the "5 C's" and read Dean Anderson's booklet before I could go to sleep.

In the meantime, I set up a seminar at Yale on the subject, and the students and I attempted to bring the "5 C's" to light in

terms of the "relationship theology" described by Reuel L. Howe in *Man's Need and God's Action*. The *Seabury Series* was being developed by the Department of Christian Education of the Protestant Episcopal Church along similar lines, and I was serving as a consultant.

The opportunity to put these ideas into shape came with the invitation to give the Robert Jones Lectures on Christian Education at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas. I am grateful to President David L. Stitt and his faculty and students for their hospitality. Mr. William L. Savage of Charles Scribner's Sons asked that I expand the lectures, and they have been completely rewritten for this volume.

In the meantime, I have tried out these ideas in lectures and conferences with a number of Church school teachers and parish leaders. When the Bible is seen as a record of the drama of God's mighty acts, experienced within the redemptive and sustaining fellowship of the Holy Spirit, it takes on fresh meaning; and the educational policies of a parish are changed. The teachers of St. Paul's Church, New Haven, have been particularly cooperative in experimenting along these lines.

Professor Pierson Parker of General Theological Seminary and the Rev. C. William Sydnor, Jr., executive secretary of the Division of Curriculum Development for the Protestant Episcopal Church, have read the manuscript and I have profited by their suggestions. As always, my colleague, Professor Paul H. Vieth, has been helpful.

My family has suffered the usual privations while I have been writing this book, and I am grateful to Elizabeth and our six children for their forbearance.

I have used a number of translations of the Bible, and each passage is marked as follows:

KJ—*King James Version*.

PB—*Prayer Book Version*.

RSV—*Revised Standard Version* (copyright 1946, 1952 by the

Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

G—*The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, by J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed (copyright 1939 by the University of Chicago Press).

P—*Letters to Young Churches, The Four Gospels*, and *The Young Church in Action*, by J. B. Phillips (copyright 1947, 1952, and 1955 by the Macmillan Co.). Used by permission of the publishers.

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RANDOLPH CRUMP MILLER

*Yale University*  
*The Divinity School*





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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE BIBLE IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TODAY

THE BIBLE has always stood at the center of Christian education, although it has never been the sole textbook of either Roman Catholicism or of the Churches of the Reformation. With the rise of the Sunday school in the nineteenth century, the Bible was the chief source for all teaching, although it was supplemented by primers, catechisms, uniform lessons, and finally by graded lessons.

Because the Bible is an adult book, although it has many portions that are meaningful to children, there has always been difficulty in finding ways of presenting it to younger Christians. The pupils in the Church schools have struggled to master the content in order to satisfy their teachers, and in many cases they have come to an understanding of its meaning, but normally they have found the Bible unsatisfactory as an answer to their immediate needs.

Much of this straight Bible teaching was presented without consideration of the findings of Biblical scholarship. Boys and girls could go through Sunday school without any knowledge of how and why the books of the Bible were written, without a grasp of the chronological sequence of the writings, and without any historical pattern for understanding the events which provided the framework for the particular passage under scrutiny. Not only in conservative congregations which rejected much of Biblical scholarship but in parishes where the best scholarship was available, boys and girls could grow up without ever knowing any view of the

Bible but a disguised fundamentalism or literalism. The lesson materials and the resources for the teachers made no reference to historical and textual studies. No use was made of translations more accurate than the King James version. The task, as the student understood it, was to master the content of the King James version in order to be a satisfactory Christian.

The problems of meaning and relevance were faced, but only in terms of selecting the most appropriate Bible passages for the age of the child. Often not even this concession to the limitations of the growing child was made. Some lesson materials used the same Bible passage for all its students, and there were only slight variations of interpretation for age groups.

A few congregations and a few series of lesson materials based their educational approach on the needs of the children and on some of the findings of Biblical scholarship. But still there was *no basis in theology* for a perspective from which to teach. Biblical material was adequately graded, and often there were fascinating descriptions of the life situations to which the original Biblical writings were addressed, but the further question was not often asked: *What is the meaning and relevance of the Gospel in its wholeness to the situation in which the particular learner now exists?*

One reason that this basic question was not asked was that the Biblical scholars had not asked the question for themselves. They were so concerned with origins, historical forms, textual matters, and other studies that they did little work in the field of Biblical theology. Certainly there was no accepted Biblical theology based on sound critical principles which was available to lesson writers or Church school teachers.

#### A NEW APPROACH

A change is taking place in the approach to the Bible in the churches, and this is already being reflected in a new approach to the Bible in the field of Christian education. Biblical theology has

come to a new maturity in recent years, as the scholarship of the experts has provided findings for those capable of making theological interpretations of what may be called the "assured opinions" of the Biblical research leaders. Both in Europe and in the United States we find many studies in the field of Biblical theology, some dealing specifically with the Old Testament or New Testament but most of them treating the Bible as a whole. Millar Burrows has provided *An Outline of Biblical Theology* which supplies accurate meanings of Biblical concepts. G. Ernest Wright, in *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, stresses the part God plays in the Biblical drama. The Bible, seen as a record of the mighty acts of God, becomes the source of theology in a new key. Avoiding systems and rational dogmatisms, this viewpoint sees God at work in the historical process of his own creation, redeeming mankind from sin and death.

James D. Smart is shocked at the way the Bible has been misused in Christian education. The presentation has been fragmentary, lacking in historical framework and background, based on a false moralism, poorly graded, blind to the strangeness of the Biblical way of thinking, unaware of the variety of literary forms, and unable to present the Word so that it will be heard.<sup>1</sup> The responsibility of those preparing lesson materials and of those training leaders, as well as of those who are working in the theory of Christian education, is to see the Bible as a whole and in the light of the best modern scholarship, and to make the Bible relevant and meaningful in the experience of the learner *now*.

This involves one other element in our understanding of the Bible. The Bible is the *Church's book*. It has its proper meaning within the context of the life of the Church. It is the message of the Church. It finds its relevance as it speaks to the community of the faithful and as it challenges those outside the Church to become members of Christ. When the Church is seen as a redemp-

<sup>1</sup> See James D. Smart, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 144-153.

tive and sustaining community of the Holy Spirit, as the Body of Christ, as an organic union of the members of the congregation in fellowship with each other and with the Father of Jesus Christ, it follows that the Church's book speaks to the members so that they can hear the Word and receive the means of grace through the sacraments and other channels of God's personal love.

An example of this approach is found in Bernhard W. Anderson's *Rediscovering the Bible* and *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (the latter being a study guide for the former), written for college students and adults. A similar combination by Robert C. Dentan, *The Holy Scriptures* and *Redemption and Revelation*, is prepared with the same end in view. These pioneering efforts on the adult level illustrate what needs to be accomplished for all age groups.

Our task, as I see it, is to see how theology affects Christian education. Only when we see clearly the relationships described by theology will we be ready to look more closely at the Bible as a drama of redemption. From the standpoint of Biblical theology, we need to examine the acts of God in the processes of history and then to see how these events can be made relevant to boys and girls, men and women, of the twentieth century. As the Bible speaks to them within the framework of the Church as a community of the Holy Spirit, the redemptive processes of the Gospel become available to them and the Gospel speaks to them where they are *now*. This is Christian education for the present moment, the point at which God and man enter a renewed personal relationship within a community of persons.

#### HOW THEOLOGY AFFECTS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

We begin with the word, "theology." Often it has been a highly technical rational procedure, operating in the realm of abstract concepts only vaguely related to the problems of daily living. It has become involved in minor details and has wandered from its purpose. On the other hand, it has at times been considered "the



queen of the sciences" and has fulfilled its fundamental meaning as "the study of God." I suggest that we keep the problem of relevance in mind by defining theology as "the truth-about-God-in-relation-to-man," which means that we discover God at work in history and in our own generation, and especially in our own daily relationships.

We all experience this kind of theology. In every action, decision, or thought we are expressing what we think is God's relation to us and our relation to God. We began to learn this when we were born. We were learning about relationships as we were loved and accepted as we were, as we discovered the dependableness of our parents and of the environment which they provided, as we were able to grow in terms of total personal development, and as we came to sense the mystery of the universe and of life itself.

But this was not an easy existence, for often we were not loved but rejected, not given dependable responses but unpredictable emotional outbursts and unreasonable rules, not provided with guidance for our growth but with barriers that stunted our development, not led into the mystery of God but into the barrenness of a one-dimensional world or into the clutches of the demonic. These earliest experiences, especially during the first three years, had much to do with the development of sound or unsound reactions to the reality of God, for our parents through their ministry had the power of life or death of the spirit.

Young children also ask questions. We are familiar with the curiosity of boys and girls who can "stump the experts," but I am referring to something deeper than that. Long before a child can talk, he is seeking to know who he is, who you are, what the world is like, where he came from, and where we are going. He discovers the answers in terms of relationships. He becomes the person of his parents' vision or lack of it, and his parents are the persons he experiences rather than what they think they are. The world is what he knows it to be by the way it treats him. He senses where he came from by whether or not he is wanted and loved. And the

fears and anxieties or the faith and commitment of his parents prepare him for the answer to his question, Where are we going?

In the earliest days of a child's life, his religious needs are met by the ministration of his parents. There is a priesthood of parents, who are the channels of God's grace in the home. As far as the child is concerned psychologically, *his parents are God*, for they have absolute authority and power over him, and in them he lives and moves and has his being. The meeting of a child's basic needs and the answers to his real questions are provided by the parents, whether they know it or not.<sup>2</sup>

These needs and questions are not restricted to early childhood. They are among the permanent religious requirements of mankind. The needs are basic to man's well-being at any time, and the questions are the fundamental ones asked by philosophers and theologians since before the time of Plato or Moses. Throughout the whole process of growing up, these needs are being met and these questions are being answered, and thus the basic stuff of a good or bad theology is being provided. The unseen hand of God our Redeemer is behind all these impressions, influences, and teachings provided by parents and others.

The process of growing up is a series of crises followed by periods of relative stability. It is in this matrix that we see how theology affects education. A child soon grows beyond the confinement of his own home. He moves from the stability of the play pen to the challenge of activities outside the home. By the time he makes this move, many of his basic characteristics have developed. Child psychologists and some theologians are convinced that the relationships in the home have a permanent influence in terms of the direction of growth far beyond what might be imagined if we judged growth on the basis of ability to communicate by words

<sup>2</sup> See Basil A. Yeaxlee, *Religion and the Growing Mind* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), pp. 44-45, and my *Education for Christian Living* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), pp. 77-81, 300-303.

alone. There is a "language of relationships"<sup>3</sup> which guides a child's belief long before words have any meaning. His idea of God and his motivation for behavior are both carved out of this early environmental situation, and he takes into his world a framework of his future theology as it is derived from the relationships which he knows best.

When a child comes to the Church school, much has already been done that can never be undone. There are miracles of conversion through such agencies as Church, home, school, or playground, and we have seen foster parents work great changes in children who have been tossed from pillar to post for seven or eight years, but what I am saying is that permanent damage or permanent resources for good are provided in these formative years. The child is not nearly so pliable when he comes to Church school as we might hope, although there are great possibilities for moral and spiritual growth and conversion against the background of the structure of personality already set.

#### FAITH, GRACE, AND THE REDEMPTIVE COMMUNITY

If I am right in my assumption that one's religious beliefs and attitudes develop from the relationships between persons, there are three elements in religious development that are crucial: faith, grace, and the redemptive community. These concepts throw us into the realm of theology, for it is at this point that theology can clarify our relationships.

Faith is primarily trust or commitment. It is belief *in*, not belief *about*. It is a relationship to a person or to a community of persons. We have faith in our parents, our friends, our minister, our Church, our nation, and our God. We learn this by the acts of faith which are necessary to establish relationships with a person or group. We trust our parents because they show themselves trust-

<sup>3</sup> See Reuel L. Howe, *Man's Need and God's Action* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), pp. 65-76.

worthy. Faith is an attitude based upon evidence, but faith is also the tendency to trust before the evidence is in, and the act of faith provides the additional data to back up our trust or to undo it. Faith, then, is decision, based on factual knowledge and going beyond it.

We are familiar with the story of the father who put his child on the mantel and had him jump. The father caught the child the first few times, and then deliberately let him fall. He said, "That will teach you to trust no one, not even your own father." While fathers rarely are that obvious, many of them betray their children's trust in more subtle ways. It is easy to see what happens to a child who has learned to be suspicious of everyone, even his own parents. His whole development is warped by these early experiences, and, as he grows, further blows to his personality lead him to lack of faith in both his fellowman and in God. He needs to pray with Walter Russell Bowie:

"From old unfaith our souls release  
To seek the kingdom of thy peace,  
By which alone we choose thee."<sup>4</sup>

Faith is always a response to someone. The child trusts his parents because they have already given him their love. This may be likened to the free gift of undeserved love which is called "grace" in theological terms. The grace is prior to the faith, and the faith is a decision to respond to grace. A person who works with boys, for example, recognizes that his willingness to give freely of his love leads to a genuine response from them. He never gets their cooperation, their affection, or their faith unless they can see his desire to love and accept them in this relationship. For the boy to be in the leader's good "graces" is highly desirable, and when a boy knows that in his unloveliest and most demonic moments there is

<sup>4</sup> From *Lift Up Your Hearts* by Walter Russell Bowie. Copyright 1939, 1956 by Pierce and Washabaugh. By permission of Abingdon Press.



a man willing to accept him as he is, the grace-faith relationship is firmly established.

The difficulty with the establishment of this relationship is that the adult in such a situation is far from perfect. He is not able of his own strength to give freely of himself in love. He may be short tempered, unjust in his judgments, fatigued by the perpetual energy of the wild Indians whom he wants to love, or not really in sympathy with the difficult process of growing up. He is just another human being, with all the weaknesses, anxieties, stresses, strains, and sins of humanity. In his relationships with children, he often betrays their trust and therefore loses their trust. He is not capable of being a channel of grace when he relies on his own resources.

If this analysis be true, no adult can afford to play God with his children. Even if they treat him as a God, he knows that he is no better than an idol with clay feet, and sooner or later the children will find it out. When he betrays their trust, he also undercuts their capacity for faith. This is of profound importance for parents, clergy, teachers, workers with boys and girls, and for our own self-analysis. We also have this same need for faith as a response to grace, and we can find no human being worthy of complete commitment. In our relationships with each other, we find that we lack the resources to give our love to others, or to have faith in those who seek to love us. Our relationships are broken on every level—personal, social and political. We do not have the power in ourselves to heal these broken relationships.

Theologically, we are forced back of the grace-faith relationship in the human dimension to the concept and experience of community. Simply to belong to a community gives one the sense of acceptance as he is. A boy wants to belong to a gang of his peers, his family, his church, his school. But he can participate in all these activities without responding in trust to those who seek to love him. These activities may work for the disintegration of his char-

acter and personality, either through demonic influences or through his own sense of frustration and rebellion. He may be in a group which is held together by mutual interests, and those interests may include various kinds of vandalism, anti-social behavior, and personal decisions which are foreign to his basic ideals.

Even when the community is good, as in a school or church, it may arouse tendencies toward loneliness, anxiety, frustration and rebellion. Because a school or church does not accept the child as he is, he does not have access to the sources of power which will help him become what he ought to be. Because the community is made up of leaders and members who are unaware of their own insecurities, it is unable to minister to his sense of being lost.

The problem of community, then, is to discover how the lost may be found, the lonely may belong, the dead may come to life. The community that reflects this process of redemption has access to sources of power far beyond those of a community which seeks satisfaction within the horizontal dimension of human relationships. Human need at its most poignant finds spiritual nourishment at exactly this point: the redemptive community makes accessible channels of power which are otherwise inaccessible.

This points to the central factor in all Christian theology: that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5:19). This pattern of death and new life, of being lost and found again, is basic to the healing of all our relationships. We find the revelation of this in the acts of God in Christ, in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Here is the motif of all life, revealed in one life. The Christian community remembers the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and in its worship finds the power to heal broken relationships in this life. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:17-18,RSV).

If we apply this principle to our homes, where the parents have



the power of death and life over their children, broken relationships can be healed. The child is lost, and there is nothing he can do to restore the relationship. The relationship is restored by the healing love of the parents, and this reconciliation is the product of the suffering love of God. The home thus becomes a redemptive community, in which all the members are loved and accepted, in which there is a structure of discipline and law, in which the children and parents are free to grow, and in which there is a source of power beyond them all which is the grace of God, who is our Redeemer.

A second element enters the Christian concept of community. The experience of redemption is combined with the sense of being strengthened in the faith. The believer is not only made new because of his faith, but he also receives power to do God's will. "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation" (Rom. 5:10-11,RSV).

When we have experienced the redeeming power of God through faith in Christ, as members of the community of faithful people we have a new kind of fellowship. The estrangement is overcome, and God helps us to remain stable and steadfast in the faith, "not shifting from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23,RSV). The redemptive community becomes a sustaining community, so that we can say with Paul, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13,RSV).

This joyful obedience to God's will is possible only when the grace of God continues to provide guidance, wisdom, and strength. The tendency to fall from grace is never completely overcome, and therefore redemption and sustaining strength are the dual experiences of reconciliation. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23,RSV), yet grace is mightier than sin, and we rejoice in the power of God's love. By Christ's death,

this process of reconciliation is made available to us. Within the community of the Holy Spirit, which is the Body of Christ, we who are members know ourselves as sinners needing redemption and as believers who are made strong by his sustaining grace. This is the mystery of the power of the Church, and it is found in the personal relations of the members with each other and in personal communion with God.<sup>5</sup>

This is the place at which theology affects Christian education. When the parents realize that the relationships of the home are the stuff of religious teaching, they bring to bear on these relationships all of their insights concerning the meaning of the Gospel. What the parents *are* is what makes the difference. They teach through their relationships with their children. They show what love means by the simple act of loving. They indicate the forgiving and redemptive love of God by their own capacity to restore their children to family fellowship. They accept them as God accepts us by sustaining them in their endeavors. They provide dependableness by being consistently loving in their demands and in their reactions. The rules of the game are followed because these rules are the structure of community life. The parents provide the atmosphere in which the children can grow, directing them and guiding them as the need arises. Thus the parents become channels of God's redemptive and sustaining love, and through them the children become aware that behind their parents is a personal being who is concerned to be in relationship with them. When a home meets these basic needs, it is on the way to becoming a redemptive community, but the parents are human and fall short of the ideal. They need the supporting strength of the Church and reliance upon the grace of God. When the home is set within a religious framework, it is able to meet the psychological, sociological and religious needs of the children. Without this framework, the parents are likely to fail in their loving because of their own sinfulness.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), IX, 458-462.

The Church is the redemptive and sustaining community of mankind, at least in its ideal formulation. Particular congregations and individual Christians fall far short of the goal, but in history we see the Church to be the result of the redemptive work of God in Christ. The Church exists as a congregation of faithful people in which the preaching of the Word of God and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are the major channels of God's grace. This community is a fellowship of love, in which the basic needs of acceptance, discipline, and growth are met within its life. It functions through its worship, its fellowship, its instruction, its pastoral work, its missionary outlook, and its supranational orientation.

Theology in general is involved in this view of the Church, but not a particular theological viewpoint. We are describing the Church in terms of its function as a redemptive and sustaining community, and we are seeing it against the background of its history as it arose from the event of Jesus Christ. As a fellowship of redeeming love, it channels the power of the living Christ to its members and through its members to the world. This is the good news of the Gospel as it comes down through the ages.

#### BOYS

Let us apply this view of the relation of theology to Christian education to preadolescent boys, ages nine through twelve. To meet their needs the Church has two outstanding functions: to provide insights, tools, and power by which parents may establish relationships within the family, and to minister directly to the boys' needs.

The Church needs to provide opportunities for both worship and instruction for parents. Because the grace of God is chiefly available through the worship of the Church, parents are able to love more completely in their relationships with each other and with their children. Within the life of the Church, parents learn their own inadequacies and sins and take steps of faith that they might be forgiven, and that they might be channels of grace in

spite of their weaknesses. God is able to use each and every parent as a means for the redemption of their children. Furthermore, the Church will provide the instruction about the religious readiness of preadolescents which parents need.

The Church's direct ministry to boys is a problem of relevance. The rebellion of boys at ages nine through twelve is natural, because the Church is not normally geared to their needs. Boys are looking for tasks equal to their strength, while the Church puts the emphasis on providing strength equal to their tasks. The Church is charged here with the responsibility of infusing a high idealism which is within the range of the boys' interests and responsibilities. Taking the boys as they are, with all of their mixed up emotions and driving power, the Church is challenged to lead these boys in directions which will help them fulfill their destinies.

But boys are not so self-assured as we might think, and while they like to assert their adequacy, they often feel lonely and shy. They are not sure that they are wanted, and often with good reason. They do not feel themselves to be an essential part of any community except their gang. As they reach an age when they may become members of a larger and more mature group, they tend to hang back unless they can bring along friends from the previous group. They are ill at ease with older boys when they come to their meetings, and girls are discounted as a total loss. They tend to be less sure of their place in the family. This insecurity is part of their "war of independence" against their parents, which begins during this period, but it also stems from a sense of guilt as they break one or another of the family mores. They feel separated and alone and need understanding and companionship, which they are just as likely to reject when offered as they are to accept.

The Church does not always offer boys in this situation an opportunity to belong. This preadolescent stage is not often understood in the Church, and while there are certain challenges offered in terms of confirmation or joining the Church, which should be a major decision that incorporates the boy fully into the life of

Christ, it frequently has no more significance than joining another club—and one run by adults at that! The facts that through baptism they are “grafted into the body of Christ’s Church” and through confirmation are “accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior” are not realized in terms of the significance of being part of a redemptive community in which they have the same value as all other boys and girls and adults.

#### THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH

The chief source of theology for the whole Church, including boys between the ages of nine and twelve, is the Bible. We believe that the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation and that the Church does not teach anything contrary to the Bible. While there may be greater or lesser freedom of interpreting the meaning of the Bible in the various branches of Christendom, there is general agreement that the Bible is the chief authority.

If theology is relevant to Christian education in some of the ways that have been mentioned, and if theology is derived primarily from the Scriptures, we are faced with the relevance of Biblical theology for Christian education. We need some kind of structure for understanding the events and message of the Bible, and we need methods for transmitting the meaning and relevance of the Bible to children and adults of various ages and degrees of intelligence. This demands of us a recasting of Biblical theology in such a way that the relationships it depicts will be correlated with the relationships we know in our daily lives. In such a manner, we may hope that our relationships with each other and with God will be transformed, so that we may know more fully the redemptive and sustaining love of God.

To this task we now turn.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DRAMA OF REDEMPTION

THE BIBLE tells a story. It is the proclamation of God's good news. It begins with what God has done and proceeds to imply who he is. It is a record of events, of God's acts on the stage of history and of men's response to God. It is a story of personal relationships between a divine personal being and human persons. The chief actor in this historical drama of redemption is God.

When we call the Bible story a drama, this does not mean a stage play. The word "drama" in its original form means "deed" or "action." When we say that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, RSV, KJ), we are dramatizing the fact that God came in Jesus Christ. The Bible is not made up of abstract ideas, and one reason why Biblical religion is the despair of philosophers is that its meaning is found in the interpretations of events. Charlotte Cushman put it this way:

"God conceived the world, that was poetry;  
He formed it, that was sculpture;  
He colored it, that was painting;  
He peopled it with living beings; that was the  
grand, divine, eternal drama."<sup>1</sup>

But the drama is more than this. After the creation of man, God continued to act. He is eternally creative, continually acting, and

<sup>1</sup> On the curtain of Ford's Opera House, Baltimore, Maryland, quoted in *Bartlett's Quotations*, 11th edition, p. 508.



seeking to bring men into the right relationship with him. Central to this drama is the event whereby God sent Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to himself. The key word is *redemption*. We call Jesus Christ our Redeemer, our Savior, our Lord, our Christ, because he was willing "to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, RSV, KJ).

The word *redemption* is associated with the practice of buying back something which formerly belonged to me. If I pawn my wife's ring, I can redeem it by paying back the money. If my friend is in jail, I can put up his bond and get him out. It also means to make up for, as when I make up for an insult by apologizing. Or I may redeem my promise by running an errand I promised to do. Or I may be rescued or saved from an impossible situation.

The Gospel describes man's sinful condition as a broken relationship with God and with his fellows. This results in conditions of worry, anxiety, nervous frustration, and sinful thoughts or actions that prevent man from redeeming himself. He faces mental, moral and spiritual frustration when he is separated from his fellows and from God. He needs redemption, but he lacks the price. He wants to get out of the situation in which he finds himself, but he needs someone to rescue him.

What is worse, man may not know the depth of his condition, the degree of his separation from God or his fellows, or even the cause of his misery. He is like a man who is physically sick and who lacks both diagnosis and the means of cure.

The Bible tells a story that reveals to man both the meaning of his condition and the possibility of being healed. It recounts the story of God's grace and man's hope. It points to a community in which the redemptive, healing and sustaining powers of God are made available to him through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible as an unfolding drama of redemption involves more than a traditional view of Bible study, character education, or membership in the Church. As we read the Bible, we discover that it is the story of God at work in history. It is drama in the basic

sense, the unfolding of a story told by the facts of temporal history. It is a record of relationships, in which men by their wilfulness broke their relationships with God and their fellows and could not restore them, and God acted in Christ to make possible a reconciliation.

There are various ways in which the drama may be broken down into a number of acts, as in a play.<sup>2</sup> Our way is to divide the drama into five acts:

Act I: Creation

Act II: Covenant

Act III: Christ

Act IV: Church

Act V: Consummation

These five "C's" help us to keep the Bible in perspective. We live in Act IV, as members of the Church, and yet Act V is constantly

<sup>2</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, in *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1953), p. 12, has eight divisions as follows:

Prologue: In the Beginning

Act I

Scene One: Encounter with God

Scene Two: The Discipline of Disaster

Act II

Scene One: The Second Exodus

Scene Two: The People of the Law

Act III

Scene One: Victory through Defeat

Scene Two: The Church and the World

Epilogue: History's Finale

G. Ernest Wright, in *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), pp. 112-116, suggests starting with the Gospel, with Christ and the Church, and then reaching back into the Old Testament for the stories of grace and election and then of the covenant and the law. Only then are we ready to understand the story of creation, of man's revolt, and of the worship and service of God.

Lewis J. Sherrill, in *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 109-116, develops themes which correspond to man's predicament: creation, lordship, vocation, judgment, redemption, re-creation, providence, and the life of faith.

coming in upon us. God's will is being done, and his judgment stands over us to make things right.

As G. Ernest Wright says, "The Bible is the record of God's acts of wrath, love and salvation in a certain specific history which is set within the framework of all history and presents to all history the hope and certainty of its redemption. The Biblical perspective of time thus carries back before Abraham to the creation. It leads forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as its mid-point, and beyond that to the end of present history and the dawn of eternity. . . . Eternity is the redemption of the present time and its extension. It is time stretched out, and one enters it by a miracle of God's creation, the resurrection of the body."<sup>3</sup>

The New Testament changes the Old Testament's perspective, for to the Jew the mid-point of history is yet to come, while for the Christian history was changed with the coming of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, God's kingdom has come, and yet it is still to come. The drama of redemption gets its tension at exactly this point of seeming contradiction, for while God has acted in Christ to give us the kingdom, there is still the kingdom to come.<sup>4</sup> The Church is the creation of God for our redemption and the Holy Spirit is given to us in the Church. We are citizens of heaven even while we continue to be citizens of an earthly community. Eternal life begins now, and yet it stands as a future gift. Furthermore, we can never see creation simply as a prelude to the change that took place in man's relationship with God, for God's continuing creative activity is seen in the redemptive process made clear in Christ, and in the gift of his power as we face our predicament now.

This view of the Bible arises from the critical studies of recent years. Once the Bible is placed at the center of the Christian reve-

<sup>3</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 81-84.

lation, this approach is not a matter for theological labels. The Bible tells the same story to liberals and conservatives in theology. They may read the story with differences of emphasis, but they have to deal with the same events. The scholarship that arose from a willingness of the liberals to follow the historical facts wherever they lead had as much to do with this approach as the scholarship that resulted from the more conservative studies of textual critics. The desire to avoid theological conclusions based on accurate scholarship vitiated some studies, but the present trend is to bring out the meaning underlying the information derived from every analysis.

Our problem is to see the Bible in the perspective of the five acts of the drama of redemption, and then to discover the relevance of this drama in the education of children and adults.

#### CREATION

*Act I* is the story of *creation*. Dressed in the imagination of the primitive Hebrews, it tells the story of how God created the earth and all that therein is. The point of the story is that God gave men life and mind and the power to make their own choices. He gave men freedom to think and act according to their own wills, and he gave them power over all the rest of creation. Adam and Eve made use of their free will by disobeying their Creator, and so they were cast out of the Garden of Eden to keep them from eating of the other tree. In just this way men always experiment with various means for getting their own way, and the result of the experiment is always the same: *men are separated from God when they use their freedom to disobey him!*

As this first act progresses, you can see into the minds of men, and as you look you see turmoil, anxiety, loneliness, frustration, and insecurity. You see murder and sudden death. You see men asking if they are their brothers' keepers. You see them unable to help themselves, for they have been caught in quicksand from which they cannot escape by their own power. You see the Creator

God, who made all things and saw that they were good, beginning to pay the price of the freedom he has granted to his creatures. You see the beginning of the drama: the need for redemption.

This first act goes back into prehistory. It was written almost three thousand years ago. While the details may be mythical or legendary, it is a true story of the history of man in relation to his Creator. It is your story and mine, and the story of our children. If we do not recognize it as such, it is because we have not yet come to know the God revealed in the Bible. It tells us of the nature and power of God and of man's relationship to him.

There is no problem of science here, for the story of creation was never intended to be a scientific view of the facts. This is a religious story, more profoundly true than any scientific story could be. It is a story of revelation, in which the meaningful acts of God are interpreted by a divinely illumined human mind, as William Temple put it.<sup>5</sup> The revelation is the coincidence of event and appreciation, for how God acts tells us who he is. God is austere and distant in his transcendence, and yet he is capable of close and personal relations with his creatures. He is aware of the malady of sin, which cannot be corrected by punishment, or even by a flood, and which rises to such arrogance in the story of Babel that man's community is broken into fragments where men cannot speak the same language.

The doctrine of creation makes clear that God is lord of everything that is, and that the world of nature is his. His creation is essentially good. There is no battle between good and evil deities, for God is a personal unity. God's creatures are the product of God's creative love, but because they are creatures they are infinitely distant from God.<sup>6</sup>

Distance from God is not the same as separation from God,

<sup>5</sup> See William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1934), pp. 315, 499.

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 35-36.



The goodness of God's creation makes possible personal relationships between God and man, but as this first act reveals, man chooses to be disobedient and wilful, and therefore he needs redemption.

This first act closes without any agreement as to how redemption may be accomplished. Man's personal relations with God are in disrepair, and man's communion with his own kind is shattered, and both of these situations are due to man's own wilfulness in disobeying his Creator.

#### COVENANT

*Act II* is the story of the *covenant*. The process of redemption began when God chose Abraham to be the instrument of saving power. God entered a covenant relationship with the patriarchs and worked through their sinfulness for their salvation. There is an agreement, a covenant, a testament between Yahweh and his chosen people, his elect nation, conveniently summarized in the Law of Moses and even more briefly in the Ten Commandments. We see men struggling with the demands of the Law, and they fall short of the requirements even before men's minutiae were added. They suffer exile; they are persecuted; they fail to find satisfaction in ceremonial; they find there is a difference between knowing and doing what is right.

But the promise of redemption stands at the center of this covenant. This is not Moses' hope based on human yearning. Yahweh takes the initiative, and he establishes a relationship with his chosen people which is more personal than the Law. "I will be your God, and you shall be my people. . . . I am Yahweh, who brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 26:12, 13). Always, however, a covenant is a two-way affair, contingent upon man's keeping God's injunctions. Man has obligations in relation to God, and these are essentially moral. It is a community affair involving the elect nation with Yahweh.

The Old Testament looks backward and forward. It is con-



cerned with God's relation to man as found in the creation; it is involved in the covenant relationship with the redemptive God of the law and the prophets; and it looks forward to the event whereby God will save his people. There is in the Old Testament a sense of waiting that is never fulfilled. Indeed, from the Jewish point of view it is not fulfilled yet. There is hope of redemption as this second act ends, but it is hope without fruition, for within the Old Testament alone there is no Messiah and Yahweh has not yet paid the price of redemption. As the curtain falls on Act II, we hear the lament of the preacher, "All is futility" (Eccles. 1:2, G). The prophets are calling for a savior to redeem men from their sins, from the brokenness of their society, and from separation from the holy God. A new covenant is needed, yearned for, and in a sense anticipated.

#### CHRIST

*Act III* is the coming of *Christ*. This event is two-fold, and we describe it as "the Word became flesh" and as "God in Christ" reconciling "the world to himself." In Jesus Christ we see a man who lived our life, suffered our temptations, was rejected and lonely and misunderstood, and finally was put to death. In his obedience, we see what human life can be, and yet his mission ended in sudden, tragic death. He was not the kind of Messiah the Jews were looking for, and they rejected him on this count alone.

To the Christian, Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament expectations. Here was the "suffering servant" of God incarnate in God's unique Son. Here was the atonement for men's sins. Here was the new covenant written in the blood of a crucified Lord. Here was the beginning of a new remnant centered in Christ and fulfilled in a new Israel.

The crucial fact in the experience of the disciples was that the cross was followed by the resurrection. The disciples found that through their faith in the risen Christ they had power to overcome their sins and to restore their broken relationships. They were

drawn into a new and deeper fellowship within their community and they became reconciled with God.

The turning point of Christian faith is the resurrection. The preaching of the New Testament community is that the kingdom is coming because the Messiah has come. The resurrection establishes the community of the new covenant, in which the living Christ is the Lord. Jesus has been chosen as the Christ, and the Word dwells in him fully. "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (II Cor. 4:6, RSV).

Through faith in Jesus Christ as Word of God and as Redeemer, we are brought back into the orbit of personal communion with God. By our sins, we have placed ourselves outside of God's family, and yet he forgives us and by his love he draws us back to him. We cannot come back under our own power; we have to wait for him to receive us. Through this faith, by grace we are healed. This is the turning point in the drama of redemption, as it is the turning point of all history when seen from the perspective of faith, and therefore we are sustained in our relationship with God and our fellows.

#### CHURCH

*Act IV* covers the era in which we find ourselves in history. It is the period of the *Church and of the Holy Spirit*. Out of the work of God in Christ there came something new in the life of men. Among the witnesses to the resurrection there was a new sense of fellowship as they met together to express their community in the breaking of bread, prayer, hymn singing, and recounting the Gospel story. They were caught up with a great passion as they received the power of the Holy Spirit, and out of Peter's sermon on Pentecost three thousand were baptized into the redemptive community.

The growing Church was a community of those who had faith

that Jesus was the Messiah. They found that the gifts of grace came to them as they served their risen Lord with devotion, intelligence and courage. They spread the Gospel over the known world, and the good news brought hope of salvation to all who would listen and accept the Gospel story. By the time Jerusalem was destroyed, the Church had moved out from Jerusalem and was no longer considered a Jewish sect. It was a community of the "new Jerusalem" which had its citizenship in heaven as well as on earth.

As in the early Church, we today are baptized to indicate that we are grafted onto the Body of Christ. We are reborn in the family of God. The broken relationships are healed within the community of faithful people. Within the Church, we come to know ourselves as sinners who have become separated from God and as children of the heavenly King who have become reconciled with him through his gift of redemptive love. *Therefore*, because of all that God has done for us in Christ in receiving us into the right relationship with him in the beloved community, we are to be worthy of our calling.

#### CONSUMMATION

Act V is the *consummation* of the drama. It is here now, and yet it is not here. We stand within the Church and under the Holy Spirit and yet we face the consummation. God is judging us now, he will judge us when we die, and he stands beyond history as the judge of the living and the dead. We stand in the hope of an eternal relationship with God, which is what heaven is and what resurrection means, and we stand under the threat of eternal separation from God, which is what hell is and what damnation means. We have the choice, and the end for each of us is in doubt.

The concept of the kingdom of God in the New Testament involves all of these concepts. Jesus' call is for repentance now, for the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom is coming, and yet it is here. We live under judgment, and yet the judgment will come when we die. Jesus uses strong language at this point, saying

that the sheep will be separated from the goats, the faithful will be received by the heavenly Father but the unjust will be cast into outer darkness, there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth for those who have been rejected. Jesus never says who these rejected people will be, for in the last analysis God is our judge.

The consummation is not all negative judgment, for God is a God of love. His judgment is in terms of love, which is so great that he sent his Son into the world for our redemption. The purpose of the Gospel is to proclaim the good news of redemption rather than the bad news of judgment. Judgment and forgiveness go together, as in Henry Scott Holland's hymn:

“Judge eternal, throned in splendor,  
Lord of lords and King of kings,  
With thy living fire of judgment  
Purge this land of bitter things;  
Solace all its wide dominion  
With the healing of thy wings.”<sup>7</sup>

The hope of resurrection unto eternal life, based on the forgiveness of a God of grace and dependent on man's faith, is the final consummation. The good news that we are to be “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17,RSV), and “Now are we sons of God and it does not yet appear what we shall be” (I John 3:2,RSV), and “death is swallowed up in victory” (I Cor. 15:54,KJ), for “God created man for immortality” (Wis. Sol. 2:23,G), is the great promise. For those who believe in Christ will not perish but have everlasting life.

By means of these five acts—Creation, Covenant, Christ, Church, and Consummation—God has entered the lists of history. He is at work in the historical process because his purpose has always been the redemption of mankind. He is seeking to save us from sin and separation, from loneliness and frustration, from

<sup>7</sup> From *The English Hymnal* by permission of the Oxford University Press, London.

anxiety and withdrawal. The good news of the drama of redemption is that God has acted in Christ to draw us from our own selfish and ego-centered ways to a life of service of God and man.

#### EDUCATION AND THE BIBLE

I doubt if the Bible is presented in this way in many Sunday schools. "Theology" is defined by G. Ernest Wright as "the discipline by which the Church, carefully and with full knowledge of the risk, translates the Biblical faith into the non-Biblical language of another age."<sup>8</sup> There is a *language of relationships* by which the story of the Bible can become meaningful and relevant to children in an educational situation. This use of relationships is evident in two-way communication between members of a family. You indicate how you feel by the way you treat a person. A child knows he is forgiven by the way his mother reaches for him. There are overtones and undertones which accompany our words that tell us with some degree of accuracy what a person really means. Chiefly is love an expression of relationship and we often grope for the words to describe how we feel toward another person. Religiously, the language of relationships involves treating other persons as ends in themselves and not as means to satisfy our own desires.

The Bible is full of descriptions of such relationships, and although the words used are in terms which adults can understand, children often have difficulty with the adult concepts that are used. Yet the relationships described are universal, and we need to discover the ways in which these relationships may be communicated to a child. This is what Theodore Wedel is insisting on when he writes, "A child can understand the love story of redemption of the Bible. The words which constitute the Bible's vocabulary are comprehensible to children and adults alike if interpreted by the language of relationships." "The Church," he says, "exists for the purpose of re-enacting the Gospel story. Here,

<sup>8</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, p. 108.



in Christian family and parish life, the divine love which accepts the unlovable and unworthy becomes a reality in experience, since the Christ of the Cross is here a continuing presence and power.”<sup>9</sup>

I agree with Canon Wedel that this is what needs to be done. I think it has not been done, except perhaps on the college level, but I believe that the key of the language of relationships will unlock the door of the drama of redemption for younger ages.

How old does a child need to be before the relationships described in the Bible begin to affect him? He is created by an act of two persons behind whom stands the holy God. He may be the result of an act of love or lust, and thus at the moment of creation personal relationships determine what will happen to him. He comes up against the natural law at the point of accepting or rejecting food, and he comes up against the moral law in terms of the dependableness of his parents. He knows rejection at the moment of anger or impatience on the part of a nurse in the hospital or of either of his parents, and in the case of the unwanted child this rejection may affect his will to live.<sup>10</sup> The redemption made possible by the act of God in Christ is available through his personal relationships, although there is no guarantee that it will be part of his experience. Normally he is baptized and received into the fellowship of the Church or he may be dedicated as an infant and come under the care of the Church. This reception into the congregation of Christ’s flock may be merely a token acceptance of the demands of society, or the congregation may respond without becoming a channel of God’s grace for the child or his parents. When it is a joyous acceptance of a child of God into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the child becomes in his relationships a member of Christ, the results in terms of his well-being

<sup>9</sup> Theodore O. Wedel, “Leadership Education,” in *World Christian Education*, Spring 1952, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> See the startling figures on the death rate of unwanted children in Reuel L. Howe, *Man’s Need and God’s Action* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), p. 20.



are incalculable. But even the newborn infant faces the consummation, for already the kingdom of God faces him in terms of judgment through the ministry of his parents. He may run against natural law due to his parents' carelessness or an accident or illness; he may be born with a deformity; he may suffer all his life from some limitation; he may die.

The point is clear that the newborn babe is within the drama of redemption from the moment of his conception. He is a creature of his Creator, and the acts of God as revealed in history are repeated in his relationships. He confronts God because "real life is meeting." God confronts him in a personal relationship mediated primarily through his parents but also through the natural processes of the world which is also God's creation.

Our task, in relating Biblical theology to Christian education, becomes clear. We need to look at the Bible and see how it can become a means of redeeming and sustaining grace to all God's creatures. We need to look at the drama of redemption and attempt to relate the five acts to the experiences of boys and girls of various age-groups, so that within the Church they will come to a believing and saving relationship with the living Christ as revealed in the Bible story. We need to look at the Bible and see how it has meaning for adults, for the Gospel is for all mankind. The Bible as it stands is not written for children, but its simplicity as drama makes it meaningful for children. At the same time, its complexity as a record of the acts of God and of men's response places it beyond the comprehension of the best minds of men.

Bernhard Anderson, in suggesting the approach to the Bible in teaching college undergraduates, writes that such a course should "help the student live through the drama of Israel's history," so that he can "project himself into the inward life of this people, to re-live the story of her life."<sup>11</sup> This involves us in certain principles

<sup>11</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, "Changing Emphases in Biblical Scholarship," in *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, April 1955, p. 87.

which are essential to good method. Lewis J. Sherrill lists seven of them: nonverbal communication in terms of love, participation in the story the Bible tells, becoming identified with the characters of the Bible by "standing beside" them in their decisions, perception of meaning in the events, learning the symbols of communication in the Christian tradition, allowing a place for genuine doubt, and recognizing that the saving knowledge of God is an ultimate concern. These principles operate within the Church as a community of the Holy Spirit, wherein persons open themselves to both God and their fellows as they are transformed by the power of God.<sup>12</sup>

As we come to a new understanding of God through the events recorded in the Bible, we also come to a new understanding of man. We see ourselves as we stand before God, especially as we become identified with the persons portrayed in the Bible and participate with them in their decisions. We see ourselves as living in Act IV (Church) of the drama of redemption, as members of the Church which was created in order that we might have a community of the Holy Spirit. We see that we stand under judgment as Act V (Consummation) impinges upon our existence in the Church.

The Bible identifies God for us and we see him revealed in history and through other persons, and it places us in relationship to our fellows. We do not start with ideas or doctrines, but with events interpreted, and then we proceed to a new understanding of our relationships with God and our fellows. In this knowledge there is direction and in this new relationship there is power for our salvation.

The Bible is essential to Christian education. But it is not an object for study from outside the Christian faith. As the Bible describes our condition, it also brings us to a new perspective on

<sup>12</sup> See Lewis J. Sherrill, *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 177-191.

our condition, and in the encounter with God we respond in faith to God's gracious gifts. We become obedient servants seeking to live according to his will.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> A briefer treatment of this subject appears in my *A Symphony of the Christian Year* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1954), pp. 12-18. The problem of the relation of theology to education is discussed in my *Education for Christian Living* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), pp. 60-71.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CREATION

THE PATTERN of relationships described in the Biblical drama of redemption is reflected in our daily living. We are created. We come into contact with law and order as the structure of family life, Church and school routines, and the ways of community agencies affect us. We find that relationships within a community are not always maintained. There are broken relationships, quarrels, offences against each other, misunderstanding, and outright enmity. Sometimes these experiences are between individuals within the group. They may be between individuals and the group, or they may be between groups. In any case, there is rejection with its resulting loneliness.

These broken relationships need to be healed, and they can be restored only through an act of forgiveness or reconciliation which breaks down the barrier. At this point, God's grace is at work to provide the power to ask for and to provide forgiveness. A ministry of reconciliation finds its resource in the redemptive grace of God. The restoring of relationships between individuals and groups also heals the breach between man and God.

We seek to be members of a community in which these redemptive processes are at work, and we find it among those who accept the Gospel, who are a congregation seeking to be true to its faith. The Church lives by its proclamation of the Word and its sacraments, expressed in its worship, fellowship, and Christian living. We are sustained in our faith and in our relationships with each other and with God. We are capable of growing in grace,

and we find that as we meet the conditions for Christian living we know the joy and hope of believing. The experience of reconciliation restores our fellowship with God and the power to sustain it, and we are enabled to respond to God's gifts with thanksgiving. Therefore, we become worthy of our calling in all that we do. But always we stand under judgment, for God is Lord of history and it is his will that is being done. Through our faith in Christ we have the hope of eternal life, and this life is found in him. The Biblical pattern of God's relationships to man is reflected in the meaningful activities of daily life.

Within such a framework as this, Christian education becomes significant. The Gospel of redemption is learned by sharing the redeeming relationships within a community. The means of grace channeled through the worshiping congregation give us power to do God's will. The Bible tells this story, and it is continued in the life of the Church through the centuries.

#### IN THE BEGINNING

We turn now to the doctrine of creation. As Christians we see the creation from the standpoint of the revelation of God in the New Testament. We say not only, "In the beginning God created" (Gen. 1:1), but also "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). This double perspective tells us that the Creator is the God and Father of Jesus Christ and that we are his creatures. He who is our Lord is also our Creator. This is the religious order of recognition, the personal way of knowing God. Because we live in Act IV (the Church) of the drama of the Bible, we can see the creation only through the eyes of those who know that the God who created us also sent Jesus Christ to be our Savior.<sup>1</sup>

There may be superficial similarities between the Judeo-Christian story of creation and those of other religions, but the pagan deities were normally immanent deities or demi-urges, or, as in

<sup>1</sup> See Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), pp. 5-9.



Plato's *Timaeus*, a mixer who put things together. The God of the Bible created everything out of nothing, and without him nothing could be made. We "believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

This is history, or prehistory, in a religious dimension. It does not pretend to be scientific, and the famous catch-question, "Which came first, Adam and Eve or the dinosaur?" is irrelevant. There are no hidden scientific meanings in the creation narratives. Rather, they deal with ultimate meanings, and God is the answer to man's condition in this and every century. We know there are two narratives in Genesis, written some four hundred years apart, and they both affirm that our relationship to God is the basic element in human life. God is Lord of creation and of history, and the hand of the divine is to be seen throughout the universe and throughout all time.

The picture of Paradise is followed by the portrayal of "Paradise Lost."<sup>2</sup> Man's wilfulness in eating the forbidden fruit and blaming it on his wife, who in turn made the serpent the scapegoat, led to their alienation from God. When we remember that the word *Adam* means "man," and when we apply the broken relation of Paradise Lost to contemporary times, we see the permanent value of the creation story. The anxiety, tensions, conflicts, insecurity, exploitation, and suffering of man, which take on new forms as often as the answer is found for the old form, are traced directly to man's will. No economic or sociological analysis is adequate to account for the situation in which man finds himself. One modern secularist commented that the world was in such a mess that the doctrine of original sin does not seem absurd any more. The Biblical view of man, who was offered Paradise and shunned it by an act of will, is a story of permanent significance for all mankind.

The story of Cain and Abel tells of murder arising from

<sup>2</sup> See Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1953), pp. 16-17.



religion. Cain believed that Abel stood higher in the Lord's sight, and so he killed him. He faced the Lord with the cynical question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9,KJ,RSV). His condemnation was to "be a fugitive and wanderer on the earth" (Gen. 4:12b, RSV).

The story of the flood, beginning with God's retribution for man's revolt, indicates in primitive form the horror that comes from man's inhumanity to man. It is a terrible story, far too severe for children, and yet it is a story that is repeated in various forms throughout history. It appears in the Inquisition, in the rapacity of soldiers as they invade enemy cities, and in the saturation bombing of wartime. This threat hangs over all of mankind in the day of nuclear fission, and yet it stands beside the hope that there will always be a remnant through which God will act to save the faithful. Noah's family was such a remnant. When the waters receded, "God remembered Noah" (Gen. 8:1) and all his animals, and he was pleased when Noah made a sacrifice to him. Even though Noah gets drunk and racial prejudice raises its head, the Lord makes a covenant with Noah. The note of redemption is sounded this early in the story of the mighty acts of God.

The first act ends with the story of the Tower of Babel. Man's arrogance spoils the unity of mankind, for because man seeks to be like God, he is guilty of pride. So the Lord says, "Come, let us go down, and there make such a babble of their language that they will not understand each other's speech" (Gen. 11:7,G). So man was spread over the earth. Alienation is again the price man pays for his sin—alienation from God and his fellows. And this alienation of language is not overcome in the Bible story until the day of Pentecost.<sup>3</sup>

This judgment of God on men's sin, even though severe, "is never without the quality of divine mercy," says Davie Napier.

<sup>3</sup> See my *A Symphony of the Christian Year* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1954), pp. 92-100, for a modern interpretation of the relation of Babel to Pentecost.

"Man is expelled from the Garden, but his life continues with every indication of divine concern. Cain is expelled from his own community, yet he is granted divine protection. Man is destroyed, but not quite: the destruction is subservient to the divine mercy which seeks to give opportunity for a new beginning. Man is dispersed and divided by fundamental misunderstandings, but again life is continued in the divine hope that man will come to know the one source of unity and peace. The divine judgment is never merely punitive in character: it is ultimately redemptive in purpose."<sup>4</sup>

There is no theologizing in this story. The Bible does not present a theory of total depravity or original sin. It forms no answer to the argument between Augustine and Pelagius, or between Lutheran and Wesleyan views of man. It tells a story that describes man's condition as he refuses to respond to the love and mercy of God and as man is separated from God and his fellows by God's judgment or wrath. The malady of sin cannot be cured by punishment, even when the cost is a death sentence by drowning. Man is so arrogant that he builds a tower to reach heaven!

God as Creator and Lord of history is eternally creative. "God did not create everything at once; He is continually creating something afresh."<sup>5</sup> If God should stop his creative activity, the world would cease to be. Archbishop Temple put this vividly when he wrote:

"God minus world equals God.  
World minus God equals nothing."

But the Bible only implies such a catastrophe, for in the Bible

<sup>4</sup> B. Davie Napier, *From Faith to Faith* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), pp. 45-46. See pp. 23-59 for a theological interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. See also *Interpreter's Bible*, I, 465-564, for exegesis and exposition of the first part of Genesis, and pp. 190-200 for descriptions of the J, E, P, and D documents.

<sup>5</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, p. 34.

God always stands in relation to man. "It is not a timeless or static relation, arising from the world of ideas," says Emil Brunner, "rather the relation is an event, and hence narration is the proper form to describe it. . . . God 'steps' into the world, into relation with men. . . . He acts always in relation to *them*, and He always *acts*." And the action of men, "whether expressing sin or faith, is always understood as action in relation to God."<sup>6</sup>

#### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The theological implications of the story of Creation are both profound and simple. First, the "I-Thou" relationship of which Martin Buber speaks is brought out in terms of man's dependence upon God. Buber has insisted that man's relationship to God is to a "Thou" and not an "It." Man is to serve God and to use things, but not the reverse. Furthermore, when man ceases to treat other men as persons, he breaks his personal relationship with both God and other men. This personal relationship with God is one of dependence and obedience. Religion is, in Schleiermacher's classic phrase, "the feeling of absolute dependence," but it is more than emotion. The total personality finds its existence, meaning and capacity for response in a personal relationship with the Lord of Creation. God's intention, beginning with this first act of creation, is for man to be redeemed, and although man's start was far from auspicious, there is hope. For "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31, KJ, RSV).

Second, our faith that a personal God stands behind the universe gives it a meaning that cannot result from the findings of science. While science, making use of the concept of natural law and the dependableness of the universe, provides means of control of the realm of nature, it never deals with the ultimate purpose that makes life meaningful. The crazy-quilt of much of life's experiences is only a complicated puzzle without the divine mind of a

<sup>6</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), pp. 47-48.

Creator behind it. God normally acts according to the uniformity of rational coherence, and therefore we know that we can depend on him, but because he is personal he may vary his action when the situation demands it. God is eternally creative, maintaining his creation by means of consistent action and by new creative acts. The events which the Bible records and the events of history are acts by which God reveals himself. It is this revelation of himself that enables us to make sense of the universe. We see it as the product of a personal mind and not as the result of an impersonal process. "Only if God is revealed in the rising of the sun in the sky can He be revealed in the rising of a son of man from the dead; only if He is revealed in the history of Syrians and Philistines can He be revealed in the history of Israel; only if He chooses all men for His own can He choose any at all; only if nothing is profane can anything be sacred. . . . And if the God thus revealed is personal, then there is more ground in reason for expecting particular revelations than for denying them."<sup>7</sup> In this way, William Temple sets up a basis for making the universe intelligible. He says that God "guides the process; He guides the minds of men; the interaction of the process and the minds which are alike guided by Him is the essence of revelation."<sup>8</sup>

Third, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18, RSV,KJ). This refers specifically to marriage and the unity of the family, but it points also to the unity of mankind. The sanctity of sex within a marriage relationship is abundantly clear, but it points also to man's need for companionship. While it is easy to read too much into a primitive story, the truth stands out that every relationship between persons has its origin in God and finds its meaning in the recognition of God's place in the relationship.

Fourth, man has a status that marks him off from the rest of

<sup>7</sup> William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1934), pp. 306, 307.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312; see Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith Today* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), pp. 49-60.

creation. He is to have dominion over the animal world, and therefore he is supreme among created beings. "God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27,RSV,KJ). This means that man is like God in spiritual power, for man can think and communicate and transcend his own self. Man is chief among God's creatures and man never loses his dominion over lesser beings and the inanimate world; indeed, man has increased his power over *all things*. Where man has failed is in his relationship with other men and with God, so that his powers of thinking, communicating and self-transcendence are distorted. The image in which man is created has been blurred, and only God can put it back in focus.

Fifth, man's response to the knowledge that he is a created being is one of awe and joy. He knows that the evil in the world is not automatic and that he can rise above fate. Because creation is still an unfinished story, and because the present state of the world is contrary to God's will, he knows that he can be redeemed. When the story of creation is read religiously, he can sing:

"Creation's Lord, we give thee thanks  
That this thy world is incomplete;  
That battle calls our marshaled ranks;  
That work awaits our hands and feet;  
That thou hast not yet finished man;  
That we are in the making still,  
As friends who share the Maker's plan,  
As sons who know the Father's will."<sup>9</sup>

#### CREATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

If we think of creation as a distant event which happened at the beginning of time, and if we try to place creation within the context of historical events, we shall have a hard time teaching it to young children. If we consider Biblical theology in terms of a

<sup>9</sup> William De Witt Hyde, *The Hymnal 1940* (New York: Church Hymnal Corp., 1943), No. 548. Used with the permission of Mrs. George Palmer Hyde.



systematic presentation of ideas, we face a formidable task. Rousseau suggested that fifteen years of age was young enough to teach religion, and if Christianity is a system of abstract ideas this is so. Therefore, we can postpone such learning of abstractions until late high school or after.

If we think of the Bible as a record of God's mighty acts in history and of Biblical theology as an interpretation of those acts, we face a similar problem, for boys and girls do not begin to think historically until about the age of ten. The situation is complicated because they must learn to think geographically about a distant and unfamiliar land as well as about distant and strange persons. By the time they are twelve, they can understand the chronology of the Biblical drama of redemption and can begin to comprehend that Jesus Christ stands at the mid-point of history, but usually the best they can do is to gain an intellectual grasp in terms of time and space. They have great difficulty seeing the relevance of these events for their own lives. They go from family history to local history, and then they are ready for the history of their nation. World history puts a great demand on their imagination and creative powers.

Those who teach religion through the use of abstract concepts or historical events assume that words have natural meanings that a child can grasp. Yet a moment's reflection tells us that even the most common words have a multitude of meanings, depending on the person and on the situation. The central word of Christian faith as we come to understand God as the Father of Jesus Christ is *love*. Love may mean "smother love" to one, sexual love to another, a Pollyanna tolerance to another, and simply liking someone to another. Even theologians struggle with the Greek words, *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*, as they attempt to tell us what Christian love means. Words find their meanings within a context of experience, and much of our teaching of young children comes before they have a vocabulary.

Behind every word is its meaning, which is derived from what

happens to people in their relationships with each other. As Reuel Howe writes, "The encounter between man and man and man and God produces the experience that has a meaning that demands a word as a permanent symbol by which all like experiences may be identified."<sup>10</sup> Words derive meanings from their emotional contexts in experience, from their use in describing relationships, and from their commonly accepted meanings in discourse.

The great words of Biblical theology can be taught through this language of relationships. Such teaching begins with the child's birth. The infant has experiences in the early days of his life which affect his personality. The Church ministers to him through the parents, as it brings its resources and insights to the home. Often this is accomplished through baptism conceived as an act of the redemptive community; it is being born into the family of God, and he is a "*new creature*." Chiefly, of course, the child is dependent upon his father and mother and others in the family, and he learns to trust them insofar as they are trustworthy. He learns who he is by the way he is treated, and he learns what other people are like through his relationships with them.

Through these experiences, he begins to learn what the doctrine of creation means. He is the product of his parents' love. In ideal situations they wanted him and planned for him. God's creative love has made possible his creation. He learns this through the language of relationships long before he is ready for words. His parents are the channels of God's grace, and through them he knows himself to be a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

If his parents were perfect, he would learn the meaning of creation in a consistent and secure manner. But his parents are human and have their weaknesses. They are the products of the same creative order and have used and misused their freedom in

<sup>10</sup> Reuel L. Howe, *Man's Need and God's Action* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), p. 70. See Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child* (New York: Noonday Press, 1955).

relation to God and their fellows. They also have known alienation and rejection. There are times when they want to "slay the Amalekites" and so they exclude the child from their midst through no fault of his own. Through the language of relationships, he learns that barriers are set up and that those responsible for his creation are far from perfect. No words can overcome the impact of a broken relationship with all its loneliness, anxiety and frustration.

Some children grow up with the balance in favor of their salvation, while others find the scales favoring damnation. There is a Garden of Eden for many infants in their innocence, but this never lasts long. As they begin to exert their own wills, they face the superior power and authority of their parents, and soon they feel like a wanderer in the land of Nod. Family life is often a babble of competing voices and divided authority, and there is no escape from the flood of emotional outbursts.

When the concern is for the use of words rather than for the creation of relationships, the Church fails in its teaching of Biblical theology. Unless the Church is in fact a redemptive and sustaining community, no words that it uses (even the great and powerful words of Scripture) will have educational or evangelical value. There is no good news of the Gospel unless words and deeds go hand in hand. When the child is old enough to attend Church school (or, better, to accompany his parents to a parish that ministers to the family as a unit), the doctrine of creation is relevant. This is the place where he learns specifically about his Creator. How he is received into the community of children and adults makes a difference. The teacher's friendliness helps him to become friendly. The teacher's trustworthiness leads him into an attitude of faith. This is the language of relationships, and it may work in reverse if the teacher shows animosity, anxiety or insecurity. This problem of providing Christian relationships is not peculiar to the nursery child, for it involves everyone who enters the ongoing life of the congregation. The Holy Spirit works in such a com-

munity, so that its members become agents of redemption even while they are in need of it. This is the ministry of reconciliation which is the responsibility to accept their place in the priesthood of believers.

God stands behind this kind of relationship and is at work in it. God as Creator and as always creative is the source of our creative love whereby all things are made new.

Against this background, words do communicate. They become the means whereby we can symbolize our relationships, can explore meanings more deeply, and can come into an understanding of the truth that makes us free. At first, our use of words is limited, even though the basic Christian vocabulary is made up of such one-syllable words as faith, grace, hope, joy, and love.

The Bible is the source of both the language of relationships and the language of words. It tells a story, and in that story is a description of relationships—established, broken, and healed. This drama of redemption provides the motives for teaching little children as well as boys and girls and adults.

This approach, as Brunner reminds us,<sup>11</sup> should start with the New Testament. As Christians, we read the Old Testament as heirs of Christ and therefore we have a perspective which illuminates the dark spots of a more primitive view and a corrective for the immoral acts associated with Yahweh. Because we stand today in Act IV of the drama of the Bible, as members of the fellowship of the Spirit we know ourselves as benefactors of the reconciling event by which Jesus Christ came to save us. We cannot start anywhere else.

#### NURSERY

Let us look at the various age-groups in the Church. The nursery child of three years is greatly limited. He has no sense of history, time, distance, or words. He has a very small vocabulary which is based on the experience of specific events. He is secure

<sup>11</sup> See *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, pp. 5-9.



only in his own home (if there) and does not know how to cooperate in group activity, although often he has a strong desire to please his elders. What he needs is most certainly Biblical: he needs love and acceptance, peace and security, purity and beauty, and simplicity. In order for his world to be dependable, it must be uncomplicated and without any subtlety whatever. He is not even ready for New Testament stories, except in a greatly oversimplified form, and he is unprepared for anything that the Old Testament has to offer. He learns of his Creator through relationships.

Ethel Smither, in her excellent little book on *The Use of the Bible with Children*, tells of a parent reading the Christmas story. The older children are attentive and absorbed in it. The nursery child sees a candle flickering and smells the greenery and the cooking. He is moved by the rhythm, the feeling of security, the joy of sensory stimulation, and the fellowship of love. The Gospel speaks, but the words are not understood, and yet the child responds.<sup>12</sup>

The nursery child rarely asks questions, but he is full of them. He wants to know where he came from. If a little brother or sister is on the way, the parents have an opportunity to explain with the greatest simplicity how children are born and that God makes them grow. He may see the relation to God in the little flowers that come through the ground at Easter time. God's creativity as it affects his own life is the only point at which our answers to his questions will have any meaning.

#### KINDERGARTEN

The kindergarten group, which is aged four and five (and often five alone), still is not ready for Old Testament stories, unless they are carefully selected and edited. In most cases, in the desire to find something suitable for children, the stories are distorted. The story

<sup>12</sup> Ethel Smither, *The Use of the Bible with Children* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1937), p. 71.



of the flood is "Disneyized" into a delightful boat trip in the rain and is as much fun as a day at the zoo.<sup>13</sup> The curiosity of five-year-olds results in profound and often unanswerable questions, such as "Who made God?" The constant "Who?" and "Why?" questions make clear their concern for the meaning of their own creation, although they have no sense of history, time, or distance. They continue to learn most of the drama of redemption because the Redeemer is at work in their lives through the ministry of their parents and the members of the congregation. This age group listens to stories of about five hundred words or less if they are rhythmic and repetitive, and some parents and teachers find that there are some simple stories from the Bible that they can adapt, but they face the danger of theological distortion.

#### PRIMARY

Children in the first two grades are hearing longer stories, but in most parts of the country this age does not read very much until the third grade. In the first two grades, stories up to a thousand words may be effective if properly selected and worded. Too often books of Bible stories rewritten for children have a vocabulary which is unrealistic in the light of what is being attempted at school, and even when the story is understood it does not carry the Biblical meaning. They may become familiar with some of the Old Testament characters and even with the primitive stories of creation. Because the Bible is drama, the story itself holds the message. Words are effective in almost perfect correlation with their concreteness. The old hymn with the refrain, "He is love," is almost meaningless, while "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," provides reassurance and security. These six- and seven-year-olds ask questions that rival those of Socrates, and they must be answered simply and within the framework of the

<sup>13</sup> Miss Smither suggests the following: Elisha and the woman of Shunem, the baby Moses, Rebecca and a stranger, Ruth and Naomi (but not Boaz), David taking care of the sheep, gifts to the tabernacle.

child's way of thinking. The teacher's own Biblical theology is the chief resource for handling these questions as they occur, and these brief question periods are often the greatest opportunities we have for meeting the needs of this age.

Third-graders can read and usually are classed with fourth-graders rather than with second-graders as far as this ability is concerned. They listen to narratives of some length from the Bible itself, and often they recognize that they have heard the same story in simpler form. A little bit of background material may be used, especially when it is tied in with the children's knowledge of present-day customs. They can learn that the Bible has two divisions and that the Old is prior to the New Testament, but they still lack a developed sense of history and chronology. Carefully selected passages may be memorized, especially if there is special effort to understand the passages and to make plans for frequent recall. Portions of Scripture traditionally used in worship should be memorized at this time, so that the children will feel more at home in the family services. Some of the responsive readings, the *Venite* (Psalm 95:1-7; 96:9, 13), the *Jubilate* (Psalm 100), Psalm 23 and other great passages used as Bible reading may be studied or memorized. To begin a service with phrases such as the following creates sound attitudes: "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1,PB), "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24,PB).

Here we see the joyous response of the creature to the Creator. The primary child knows himself as a child of the heavenly Father. He will sing:

"This is my Father's world.  
E'en yet to my listening ears  
All nature sings, and around me rings  
The music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world.  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas,  
His hand the wonders wrought."<sup>14</sup>

As primary children see the wonder of God's creation, the germs of stewardship may be planted. As God's creatures, we share with all created things the glory of having been made by God. Therefore (and a child's logic attains this level), we are to be faithful in our care of God's world. Opportunities within the primary department to bring animals, bugs, flowers and other created things should be normal procedure.

#### JUNIORS

From the third grade on, the child's capacity to assimilate facts increases rapidly. He will listen to well-told stories and he is often surprised to discover that they are in the Bible. Fourth-graders like to read the Bible for themselves and the problem is to find an edition that is pleasant to read. Most of them will be happy with any edition of the *Revised Standard Version*. They will find remarkable selections in Edgar J. Goodspeed's *The Junior Bible* and *The Short Bible*. *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* has the Apocrypha as well, and the American idiom is helpful to juniors especially. The Old Testament passages in the translation by James Moffatt are easy to read. Because the creation stories are best understood from the New Testament perspective, mention should be made at this point of the excellent translations of the New Testament alone by J. B. Phillips and Francis Weymouth. The King James version is constantly being published in editions aimed at making reading easier.

Fifth- and sixth-graders have a good historical sense, and for

<sup>14</sup> From *Thoughts for Everyday Living* by Maltbie D. Babcock; copyright 1901 by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929 by Katharine T. Babcock. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

the first time God can be presented as working in history. The drama of redemption should be seen in perspective, and while the language of relationships is still essential, words can be used to provide information in a new and meaningful way. For the first time, the stories in Genesis 1-10 can be presented in full as a religious interpretation of the beginning of creation and man's response to his Creator. Care must be taken at this point to make clear that these stories are not scientific pictures of how the universe began, but that they are stories of God's relation to man and of man's response to God. They can see the drama of redemption at work in their own lives, and this can now be pointed out by the use of words to describe their condition. They are capable of elementary analysis of their coming into their own family and into the Church, and they can see the way in which they have rejected this fellowship. They may repeat the question of a younger period, "Where did God come from?" but they want a fuller answer.

Good teaching at this age, as with all other ages, must start with the learner. His situation, in which he knows acceptance and rejection, is crucial. He is discovering the rules of living successfully with others. He is growing in his total person and he has the satisfaction of meeting and overcoming various obstacles, but he is becoming aware of problems that he cannot solve. He has ideas, accurate or not, of where he stands in relation to others in his family, to his schoolmates in the classroom and in the gang, and to his Church. He is now fully aware that there is a God who made him and all the world, and he responds with reverence or fear or superstition or indifference. Our purpose is always to place God at the center of the educational process and to bring the learner into a redemptive and sustaining relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The living God is our Creator. The junior learns to use the Bible devotionally. We choose hymns, poems, stories, and prayers which are suitable to his needs.

The junior can make use of the story of creation, but he needs

to be told that being made in the "image" of God does not mean that God is a big man. The forbidden fruit story can have meaning to a junior who has been forbidden jam. He has a habit of blaming his playmates instead of a snake, but he can understand why those who fear snakes would place the blame there in a primitive story. Perhaps he has been sent from the dinner table on a night when his favorite food was being served, and he knows how it felt to be cast out of the garden. He may not see God at work in these relationships, but his parents and his teachers will be able to interpret God's work in these terms.<sup>15</sup>

Although Thanksgiving time emphasizes the meaning of God's creative activity for all ages, it is particularly suitable for juniors. Younger groups already know the story of the Pilgrim Fathers and know the rejoicing that results from the overcoming of hardships and the blessings of the land. Hymns such as "We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land" and "We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing" are suitable for primary age. But the junior can delve more deeply into the meanings of the more advanced hymns. Leonard Bacon's "O God, beneath thy guiding hands our exiled fathers crossed the sea," John Milton's "Let us, with a gladsome mind, praise the Lord, for he is kind," and Jan Struther's "We thank you, Lord of heaven," are particularly suitable for juniors. Such passages as Deut. 8:1-11, 17-20; Deut. 26:1-19; Psalm 104; John 1:1-5 are helpful here. Intermediates may delve more deeply into such passages as Job 9:4-10, 12:7-10, 38:1-41:34; Isaiah 40:12-31, 48:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4-10; II Peter 3:5-6; I John 1:1-4.

#### JUNIOR HIGH

The intermediate, or junior-high, group is entering adolescence. They are well into the study of history in school and they are capable of going back into the origins of their religion. It is here that I would like to see a thorough study of the Old Testament,

<sup>15</sup> See *Right or Wrong?* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1955), pp. 93-95.



withholding some of the uninteresting or misleading portions but with the full historical sweep of the drama of redemption. With a fifty-minute class period meeting for thirty Sundays, time is strictly limited to carefully selected content, but the right use of such books as Hulda Niebuhr's *The One Story*<sup>16</sup> gives them a grasp of the significant elements in the story. The play *Green Pastures* catches the dramatic effects of the Old Testament with imagination and reverence. Not only is there a reverent picture of God as the Creator and sovereign ruler of the universe, but the need of redemption is made clear in the scene in which God discovers the need of suffering as the means of redemption.

Seated in an armchair near the center of the grounds God is staring thoughtfully into space. His pensiveness worries Gabriel. He has been sittin' that way an awful long time. Is it somethin' serious that is worryin' God? It is, God admits, very serious.

"GABRIEL (awed by his tone)—Lawd, is de time come for me to blow?

"GOD—Not yet, Gabriel. I'm just thinkin'.

"GABRIEL—What about, Lawd? (Puts up hand. Singing stops.)

"GOD—'Bout somethin' de boy tol' me. Somethin' about Hosea, an' himself. How dey foun' somethin'.

"GABRIEL—What, Lawd?

"GOD—Mercy. (A Pause.) Through *sufferin'*, he said.

"GABRIEL—Yes, Lawd.

"GOD—I'm tryin' to find it, too. It's awful impo'tant. It's awful impo'tant to all de people on my earth. Did he mean dat even God must suffer? (God continues to look out over the audience for a moment and then a look of surprise comes into his face. He sighs. In the distance a voice cries.)

"THE VOICE—Oh, look at him! Oh, look, dey goin' to make him carry it up dat high hill! Dey goin' to nail him to it! Oh, dat's a terrible burden for one man to carry! (God rises and murmurs 'Yes!' as if in recognition. The heavenly beings have been watching

<sup>16</sup> Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949.

him closely, and now, seeing him smile gently, draw back, relieved. All of the angels burst into 'Hallelujah, King Jesus.' God continues to smile as the lights fade away. The singing becomes fortissimo.)"<sup>17</sup> (*The curtain falls.*)

Chiefly, the Old Testament should be used with intermediates to help them understand themselves religiously, but the identity should not be too obvious. They are in the middle of their "War of Independence," which will soon reach the stage known as "temporary insanity." They have deep needs for both security and independence; they find their security in being objective in their study of what happened to someone else, and find their independence in being able to make free judgments about what they are studying. They need guidance while making their decisions, but their decisions must be *their own*. They face loneliness, frustration and acne, but they are too shy to want to make these problems clear. They need love at the time they are most unlovable, and this is when we find it hardest to love them. Even the Church is impatient with their foibles and struggles, although this is often the period when they are confirmed or make their profession of faith. Often they drop out of Church school at this point, and this usually means the end of any systematic Christian education unless they are fortunate enough to get caught up in the right kind of youth group.

The doctrine of creation offers us a real opportunity with junior-high pupils. They are concerned about history, so that the exciting stories of Old Testament heroes have meaning, but they can get behind history to the religious interpretation of origins. They are fascinated by the Biblical scholarship that opens up a documentary approach to the stories in the first part of Genesis.

The two creation stories and the mixture of documents running through the first ten chapters challenge their developing critical

<sup>17</sup> From *The Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly. Copyright, 1929, by Marc Connelly. Reprinted by permission of Rinehart & Company, Inc., New York, Publishers; pp. 172-173.

faculties. The problem of relating these profound religious interpretations of creation to scientific theories of the origin of the universe and of man should be faced at this age, so that they will see what science and religion say to each other for them *now* as well as in high school. Chiefly, they will be able to identify themselves with the characters in these stories as they reflect the adolescent experiences of feeling cast out, of rebellion against those who stand for goodness and truth, of being judged as unworthy, and of forming their own language as a barrier against adult interference. These parallels to the Bible story in their relationships are essential for seeing the religious dimension of our teaching.

#### HIGH SCHOOL

The adolescent stage carries over into high school. The basic needs remain the same and the growth toward maturity results in greater independence and a willingness to submit to self-analysis. A whole new set of interests and questions develop. Objective teaching is less desirable and origins are taken for granted, while the trinity of "Me, Myself, and I" is the center of all discussions.

If the Bible has been taught intelligently and religiously in the lower grades, the high school learner will be concerned to know how God has made himself known through his mighty acts, and he will see how God is the central figure in the Biblical drama. The doctrine of Creation is not of particular interest to him as an event in the past except in his struggling with the battle between science and religion (which should have been worked out in its essential principles on the junior high level). He needs to see that science is essential for getting at the facts of what happened, whether the problem be that of creation or of miracles or of the power of prayer, but he needs to see that religious insight can transcend scientific categories without contradicting them.

Ideally, the high-school student is capable of discovering God's creative activity in the world of his own experience. He is no longer

as impressed as younger children are by the mystery of growth in animals and plants, but he can see the grace of God at work creatively in human relationships. The creativity of God as seen in the development of friendships, in the increasing devotedness of happily married couples, and in the coherence of the Church as a community not only makes sense but challenges him as he looks forward to his vocation, his marriage, and his status in the Church and community. Because he is now aware that he is approaching adulthood and maturity, he is able to understand how God works creatively in him as this process continues.

He also finds God as his Creator in worship. He discovers anew the meaning of the following:

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of  
Creation;  
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and  
salvation:  
Join the great throng,  
Psaltery, organ, and song,  
Sounding in glad adoration.”<sup>18</sup>

This response of reverence by the creature in the presence of his Creator is the essence of what Rudolf Otto calls “the idea of the holy.” While some high-school youngsters seek this response through aestheticism in their worship, they are driving at something more profound. They are discovering the attitude of absolute dependence on a creative deity who is Lord of the universe and therefore their Lord. They find acceptance in a community which has come from an act of God in Jesus Christ, and as they discover that the Church is a fellowship of the Holy Spirit at work in history, their own security is strengthened. They discover that they have status as human beings in God’s sight, and that they have

<sup>18</sup> Joachim Neander, in *The Hymnal 1940* (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1943), No. 279.

dominion over the non-human elements of God's creation. They respond as creatures desirous of pleasing their Creator who has made them and all the world.

These are some of the implications of the doctrine of Creation which appear within the language of relationship and of words in the congregation of faithful people. All children, young people and adults will not respond to the same elements in this first act of the drama of redemption, but it speaks to the condition of individuals in each age group, and our task in the congregation is to find the point of relevance for each individual, so that through us the Gospel will speak to each person in the light of his need.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### COVENANT

**G**OD TAKES the initiative. God took the initiative in creating the universe and man, and man's reaction was to seek to usurp God's position. God took the initiative in leading Abraham from Ur to the land of promise, and he guided Moses in the exodus from Egypt. This way of acting on God's part was a free gift, without any qualifications whatever. As G. Ernest Wright puts it, "Israel's greatness lay in what to the nation was a simple fact, that God had chosen her; and God's choice rested in his own mysterious grace. That grace could not and would not be explained; it could only be inferred and accepted in faith and in gratitude."<sup>1</sup>

Once this idea of election became central to Israel's thinking, it was easy to apply it to what happened to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to Moses, and to many events throughout the history of the chosen people. Israel's sense of being a nation rested on a special relationship to Yahweh, due to God's grace in entering into an agreement with the nation, by which Israel was called to a special mission.

When Abraham was promised many descendants, "he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6, RSV). Cuthbert Simpson comments, "Righteousness is here a right relationship to God, and it was conferred by the divine sentence of approval in response to Abraham's trust in God's character. . . . Here Abraham, who had no law to fulfill, was

<sup>1</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. 50.

nevertheless made righteous because of his inner attitude.”<sup>2</sup> The Lord has made an agreement with Abraham, and Yahweh would maintain this covenant as long as Abraham’s descendants imitated his faith.

This illustrates one element in the Old Testament doctrine of the covenant, and it is the emphasis which finds fulfillment in the new covenant through Jesus Christ. It is a covenant that comes into being when man responds freely to God’s grace. The primary requirement is that man put his faith in the Lord. It is a relationship between God and man that expresses itself in fellowship. Man’s response is “What must I do?” This interpretation of covenant is not maintained consistently in the Old Testament, but it is in this sense that Jesus said of himself that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets.

Looking forward for a moment in the development of the drama of redemption, we can see that this emphasis points to the coming of Jesus Christ as an act of God. It leads to the Jewish expectation of a Messiah, but as Christians we believe that in Jesus Christ God has fulfilled his side of the agreement. Oscar Cullmann writes that for the Christian there is a new division of time which the Jew does not admit, and that this event took place in Jesus Christ. While God’s relationship to history and to time are identical in both religions, the Christian sees Jesus Christ as the mid-point with a looking back to creation and the old covenant, on the one hand, and a looking forward to the end of history, on the other. Because the mid-point lies in the past for Christians, we have a view of the world which is radically different from the view of the Jews. For the Christian, then, the outcome of the drama of redemption is not in doubt, for the decisive act took place in Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Biblical theology thus continues to be an interpretation of history, written from the standpoint of Act IV

<sup>2</sup> *Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), I, 600.

<sup>3</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 81-84.

(the Church) in the unfolding drama of the Bible, and thus we can see more clearly what the covenant means in terms of the primitive days of Abraham and Moses and the prophets.

## THE EXODUS

The great event in the covenant story is the escape of the Israelites from Egypt.

“By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up  
from Egypt” (Hosea 12:13,G).

The realization of this covenant came to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was a binding relationship in which Yahweh took the initiative. Yahweh makes clear his requirements, and Israel pledges obedience and seals the agreement with a blood sacrifice. Man may fail to keep his side of the agreement, but Yahweh does not cease to love his people. The love of God from the beginning has been redemptive.<sup>4</sup>

This covenant was directed to the nation. It involved a community, and the community responded with ceremonial as well as with obedience. “The will of God is always directed towards human life as a whole, and the whole body corporate,” says Emil Brunner. Yet it demands the response of the individual, who is commanded to love his neighbor.<sup>5</sup>

It is a distortion of the covenant to reduce it to the Ten Commandments. This code is a helpful summary of the Law, and when limited to its primitive meaning it fails to do justice to the revelation that took place. While the covenant at times is interpreted in purely moral or ceremonial terms, and while moral and ceremonial obedience are involved in man’s response to the covenant, it strikes a deeper note. When we see the full meaning of this agreement between God and man, we discover that God is acting

<sup>4</sup> See H. Wheeler Robinson, *Redemption and Revelation* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942), pp. 226-227.

<sup>5</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), p. 218.

in terms of grace and on his side offers freely to his chosen people to be their God. Because he is their God, he has a claim on them, the claim of love. This is not always clear in the Old Testament, and yet it is found within the strands of interpretation of what God has done.<sup>6</sup>

It is a covenant of both law and grace, for the law is Yahweh's gift. The leaders of the nation did not create this law, but they had the responsibility of administering it. While the law was given to the community, each individual was responsible to God for his own obedience to the law. The law was the great equalizer, and no human status made any difference in its demands.<sup>7</sup>

The history of the kingdom of Israel down to its destruction is an interpretation of events against the background of the covenant. Many times the standards of loyalty to Yahweh seem to the modern mind to be grossly immoral, but they are in terms of the moral standards vouchsafed to a primitive people. The great sin is not the limitation of moral insight, a limitation we all share, but is disloyalty to God. The people were convicted of sin by the prophets, and the prophets measured them against the demands of the moral law. Kings and statesmen, then as now, found it more expedient to compromise and to enter into alliances than to rely on the power of Yahweh. Israel knew the requirements of being a bride of the Lord, yet preferred to play the harlot. Men stoned the prophets and sought escape through ceremonial rather than obedience.

#### THE PROPHETS

Prophetic religion is ethical monotheism, not an ethical culture society. The demands are those of a Lord whose thoughts and ways are beyond our ways, and yet the requirements of the Lord

<sup>6</sup> See Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, pp. 220-221. See Herbert H. Farmer, *God and Men* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), pp. 57-61, 66-69.

<sup>7</sup> See G. Ernest Wright, in *Interpreter's Bible*, I, 356.

are combined with the promise of help. For God is at work in history; God has chosen his people and will not let them down. The covenant runs throughout the Old Testament story, and it is man who fails by not keeping the agreement. Man is willing to sell this great heritage for a mess of pottage by making deals with pagan deities, foreign powers, and even by under-the-counter bargains with Yahweh himself.

The prophets steered around the legalism of the covenant idea because it had become associated with outward decency in morals and worship. Hosea preferred the figure of marriage with its binding quality. The love of a husband appeared in Hosea and of a father in Jeremiah. Second Isaiah used the illustration of a mother who has not forgotten her child, and in another instance of one who has redeemed a relative from slavery. The prophets pointed out that when man breaks his portion of the agreement in any of these relationships, he is powerless to restore the relationship.

Prophetic faith insists that Yahweh desires to be in community with his creatures. He is a forgiving God who writes his law on men's hearts, and who will restore Israel to her select position. The prophets, seeing the failure of the original covenant, although it has been offered in many ways, look forward to a new covenant brought into existence by the Messiah. Says the Lord:

“for my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me,  
the fountain of living waters,  
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,  
broken cisterns,  
that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13,RSV).

Jeremiah sums it up. “For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you



shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.' But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; yet they did not listen to me, or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers" (Jer. 7:22-26, RSV).

The promise that judgment would be in terms of cataclysm was hard for the Jews to believe, just as it has been hard for Christians of the twentieth century to believe. Yet this is a fact of history that demands both moral and theological interpretations. The power of the Old Testament teaching on history lies in the ability to see the implications of suffering, tragedy, exile, and cataclysm. As Herbert Butterfield puts it, "It is almost impossible properly to appreciate the higher developments in the historical reflection of the Old Testament except in another age which has experienced (or has found itself confronted with) colossal cataclysm, an age like the one in which we live."<sup>8</sup> It is out of such conditions that the Old Testament provides hope, a hope that lies in faith in God who is working out his purpose in and through history.

The drama of redemption comes down to us in story form, as one historical event after another adds something to the total picture. We see the Israelites as they move into the Land of Promise, as they become a nation and rise to a great height under the kingship of David, as the nation is split and involved in both internal and external warfare, and as, finally, the Babylonians take over and the exile comes. During these tumultuous years, the prophets interpreted events as God's actions, and in this coincidence of event and interpretation we find revelation.

The meaning of exile, the purpose of tragedy, and the redemp-

<sup>8</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 69.

tive nature of suffering are explained by the Second Isaiah. Perhaps this is God's shock treatment for Israel's spiritual schizophrenial. This unknown prophet of the exile saw the meaning of Israel's suffering, and while he identified Cyrus with the Messiah and Cyrus was the political agent of Israel's freedom, what was new in his thought was the interpretation of Israel's role as a suffering servant. While Israel had suffered doubly for her iniquities, as all the prophets taught, Second Isaiah saw that God was manifesting his lordship over all mankind. Israel's suffering was for the sins of the whole world. God remained faithful to his covenant with his people, and by his grace they would be redeemed. This astounding truth, which was revealed anew in Christ, is that God works through humiliation, suffering and rejection, and out of his forgiving love come redemption and reconciliation.

#### THEOLOGY AND THE COVENANT

As we look at the doctrine of the covenant, we can see certain outstanding elements of Old Testament theology. The Old Testament is a unity within itself and with the New Testament, bound together by its awareness of God's action and by the nation's response. There are great varieties in Old Testament religion, but it is held together by the doctrine of the covenant. Man is what he is by virtue of his relationship to his Creator, but God's chief activity in this relationship is to be a covenant maker. James Muilenburg writes that, "The active God reveals himself to men in the midst of their own world, expressing his purpose and will, announcing his judgments, and proclaiming his promises and assurances."<sup>9</sup> Various motifs recur throughout the unfolding drama, the central one being the covenant relationship. Subsidiary to it are the divine judgment, the righteousness of God, and the developing cultus. Second Isaiah rises to new heights with the revelation

<sup>9</sup> James Muilenburg, "The Return to Old Testament Theology," in *Christianity and the Contemporary Scene*, ed. by Randolph C. Miller and Henry H. Shires (New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1943), p. 40.

of God's power to redeem through suffering. And Habakkuk anticipates Paul when he writes,

"Verily, the wicked man—I take no pleasure in him;  
But the righteous lives by reason of his faithfulness" (Hab. 2:4,G).

There is continuity between events in the Old Testament, and there is a progressive revelation in that the events which are God's acts provide more data for interpretation and appreciation. But more than this, there is a continuity between persons, and this carries over into the New Testament. James Muilenburg observes, "The sympathy between such prophets as Hosea, Jeremiah, Second Isaiah, some of the psalmists, and the writers of the Synoptic Gospels is unmistakable; and a well-conceived theology will not do violence to it."<sup>10</sup> Great culminating moments, such as the covenants with Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, and Second Isaiah, stand out. The Christian conviction that all these events and their interpretation find their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ provides the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments. And the Christian will see all these meanings from his own perspective, standing within the Church, which is the redemptive and sustaining community of the new covenant founded by the act of God in Jesus Christ.

#### COVENANT AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Biblical presentation of the covenant centers in acts of God that are concrete and specific. This part of the story of the mighty acts of God, therefore, is easier to communicate, for the language of words can be used within a framework of history. Many of the basic elements in the covenant appear in the ex-

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41. See John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), pp. 24-30; John Wick Bowman, *Prophetic Realism and the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 88-100; B. Davie Napier, *From Faith to Faith* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1955), p. 191.

perience of children before they can grasp the words that are involved.

The relationships of grace and law, which appear in the stories of Abraham and Moses, cannot be taught to nursery children in terms of historical events. Yet even the smallest child seemingly overcomes the contradiction between love and law as he faces his parents' attempts to train him. The little boy sitting on the toilet and attempting to perform faces his mother's displeasure, but normally he does not for a moment doubt his mother's love. The father holds back the toddler to keep him from falling or running into the street, and he uses force to restrain him and therefore may arouse a temper tantrum, but a moment later the child rejoices in the security of holding his father's hand. He discovers that his parents love him even when he fails to come up to expectations. They have entered into a covenant relationship with him, by which they provide a dependable structure of existence to satisfy his wants and needs. He, in turn, is expected to grow into the family's way of doing things, and he finds that by accepting the law and order of the household he is part of the community. While the relationship with his parents is maintained from their side, it is up to him to maintain it from his side. As time goes on, he finds that they respond with both love and justice, and in his failure he is alienated from his parents although he is never beyond the boundaries of their love.

If his parents were perfect, he would discover that they were always dependable. When he is young, he treats them as his God, but they do not always keep their side of the agreement. He discovers that they also stand under a law which they did not make but which they accept, and therefore they have an agreement as members of the Christian community which he does not yet understand. But as he begins to see the meaning of his baptism, he knows that he stands under the same moral law as do his parents.

The young child also has the experience of election. He knows he has been chosen by his parents. This is as true of adopted as of natural children. Their status depends on their having been chosen. But the unwanted child loses this sense of belonging, of having been planned and prayed for, and thus he does not learn through his relationships the glory of election.

The moral law has its beginnings in what the parents require. When verbalized, it is "what we do at our house." The beginnings of conscience are found when the child finds he can choose between a right and a wrong. This, I suppose, is an innate capacity. Practice in choosing helps to strengthen this capacity. But conscience is educated in what should be selected. As children develop the habit of acting by their conscience, the raw materials are provided by the guidance of his companions. A child in Sunday school once admonished his teacher, "Don't say 'Jesus Christ'; it's a dirty word." He had a conscience, and the use of Jesus Christ as a swear word had conditioned him to respond in this manner. So also, young children may be taught to cheat and lie and steal and their consciences can be twisted to select these as *right*. The power of such misguided moral education is shown by the reports of young Nazis who had illegitimate children to the glory of the Reich!

The process of growing up is a constant challenge to the conscience. So much new material comes along for which the conscience is unprepared. So many new pressures go along with each decision. No external authority seems to be of much help.

At what point can the authority of the individual parent or teacher be supplemented by the authority of law or of the group? At what point do children consider agreements binding?

#### NURSERY

A nursery class can attain some of these covenant factors. The child can be made to feel that there is something special in being a member of the Church, as indeed there is because he is a mem-



ber of the community of the new covenant. He is the member of a group that accepts him, and the adults in the group know that they are enabled to love him because God first loved us. Within the activities of the group there are certain agreements. Depending upon the methods, skills and insights of the teachers, there are routines, degrees of freedom, and expected responses. There is a certain amount of simple ritual which provides security. But chiefly the nursery child knows that he can count on the teacher to respond in a dependable manner to any situation that may arise, and he knows what is expected of him. The simple services of worship and the exposure to the family worship service in the Church provide an atmosphere of reverence in which he can share, and it is possible to verbalize in terms of the love and dependableness of God.

#### KINDERGARTEN

As in nursery, a great deal of kindergarten activity is play. Through play they learn new words, have experiences of real things in their world, pay attention to their games, and experiment with new activities. These are foundations for future learning as well as means of learning now. When they are provided the opportunity to do these things with a sense of security and with the right kind of direction, they are learning of their covenant with other people.

Groups should be small. A child gets lost in a mob. A kindergarten class should have no more than twenty in it. And with twenty children there should be enough teachers to keep them in much smaller groups most of the time. Many different activities can go on at once, and therefore the child is doing what he needs most to do.

Part of *our covenant* with our children is to provide suitable learning situations that match his capacity at the age of four or five. God wants them to learn in their own way and in his good time.

## PRIMARY

The primary child needs to be treated in much the same way. He may become familiar with some of the Old Testament characters, and learn in an elementary way of the agreement between God and his people. He begins to learn the ways of the community and experiences the requirements that go back to an earlier agreement between the community and God. He discovers that the Bible tells him what to do, and if this is made specific in terms of his own behavior it has meaning in terms of character development. There is some question as to the proper time for introducing the Ten Commandments: some prefer the third grade and others wait until the junior ages. If the emphasis is placed on the first, fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth and tenth commandments in terms of the experiences of third graders, the Decalogue in simplified form might be used. Moral choices still are determined very much by his loyalty to his parents and his teacher, and if he knows that they accept the authority of the Ten Commandments it may be helpful. Primary children should have opportunities to make genuine decisions. They should have enough time to complete projects that they undertake, either during class time or over a period of weeks. Avoidance of sloppy, partially completed work is essential. They should be helped to discriminate between trivial and important matters within the limits of their genuine freedom. They should develop manners. They should share in the ceremonial customs of the congregation. This kind of discipline underlies the meaning of covenant for this age and for older children as well.<sup>11</sup>

Content is of value when it meets the learner's needs. During this period, learning is still primarily through influence. For example, when a child of six loses his mother, in a few years he will hardly remember her; but the influence of those six years

<sup>11</sup> See A. Victor Murray, *Education into Religion* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953), pp. 136-140.

will be indelibly stamped on his character. A child who has been bilingual for the first few years of his life will suddenly find himself in a situation in which he needs only one language, and the other will soon be lost beyond recall, especially if the forces surrounding him indicate disapproval of the second language. Influence continues, but even the use of words may be lost. The direction of growth in character as the child responds to personal relationships and to God have a permanent quality.

### JUNIORS

Juniors, we have said, like to read for themselves. The popularity of such books as Chad Walsh's *Knock and Enter*<sup>12</sup> as a confirmation manual and of the readers in the Presbyterian *Christian Faith and Life Series*, especially Norman Langford's *The King Nobody Wanted*,<sup>13</sup> supports this view. For the first time, in about the fifth grade, they can understand that the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah came in this order. They have developed an idea of justice as reflected in the ten-year-old with his constant refrain that "It isn't fair." The idea of law as the basis of the agreement between God and man is understood, and the Ten Commandments may be studied in some detail against their historical background. The difficulty with the story of Moses is due to the primitive conception of God as portrayed in the burning bush and the voice, but if this is interpreted in terms of conscience or insight juniors will find the story exciting and relevant.

E. M. Conger's *God's Family*<sup>14</sup> tells the story of "God's Mighty Acts." The covenant with Abraham is interpreted as a sacred promise by God and by Abraham. The story of Jacob and Esau is simply told. God had kept his promises throughout the story of the exodus, and Joshua led his people into the promised land.

<sup>12</sup> New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1953.

<sup>13</sup> Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949.

<sup>14</sup> Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1955.

The hope for a Messiah is found in the prophets, and finally Jesus came to fulfill God's purposes.

It is also a time for understanding Jewish customs in the present, and Florence Mary Fitch's *One God: the Ways We Worship Him*<sup>15</sup> may be combined with historical materials to make clear the continuity of ancient Jewish customs in the modern age. Walter Russell Bowie's *Bible Stories for Boys and Girls*<sup>16</sup> in the Old Testament volume may prove helpful at this point. They work intelligently with maps and pictures, but there is danger that they may become so enamored with their geographical projects that they will miss the point of the drama of redemption.

The gang spirit is strong at this age, and the idea of an agreement between God and the community is reflected in their own desire for organizations that have rules. They see that agreements can be binding, and they put great store in keeping their word. They are also concerned for social justice, and the teachings of the prophets are relevant at this point, especially when prophetic religion is seen within the framework of the covenant.

The concrete language of the Bible is helpful here. While juniors get lost in genealogies, they glory in the dramatic episodes of history, and they can begin to see how God has revealed himself through specific acts. They want to know the facts and whether what is represented as history is really true. Care must be taken with those stories which may be considered legendary, and the teacher must be sure of his facts. The best place to begin is with the Exodus, which should be studied in some detail, and then make a careful analysis of Moses at Mount Sinai. Some of the ceremonies of the covenant (Josh. 24, Neh. 8-10, II Kings 23:1-3) might catch their interest. They need to see that the law is hard to keep, not because it is impossible but because people prefer to follow "the devices and desires of their own hearts."

<sup>15</sup> New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1944.

<sup>16</sup> Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951.

## JUNIOR HIGH

The junior-high boys and girls are probably the least understood of all. Often they continue in Church school under pressure. Boys and girls are lost before they quit coming, and sometimes what is done at the intermediate level guarantees their withdrawal as soon as parents stop forcing them to attend. There is no easy answer to this question, for the answer lies in the complexities of the personality of the early adolescent. Many of the factors are external and outside the control of home or church. Most of them have to do with the peer group, and if the whole group is captured and its interest maintained, a strong high-school group is almost a certainty. The best situations are found in suburban communities where all boys and girls attend the same junior high school and remain in the community at the same high school. Private schools, boarding schools, downtown churches drawing from various public schools, and competing agencies and congregations split up the peer groups and make the task of holding this age much more difficult. Even when all the conditions are ideal, the educational program may fail to capture their interest, and therefore the local congregation needs to tailor its policy to fit the needs of the particular individuals it hopes to capture. Fishers of intermediates need to be sure their bait is right. We cannot even be sure that boys and girls should be separated or kept together. We cannot be sure if a particular group is ready to talk about their personal concerns, as do most high-school students, or whether they prefer to escape from the display of their own problems by attacking objective content.

In most cases, it is my opinion that eighth- and ninth-graders will attack content that is external to themselves. This is why a course on Old Testament is sound procedure. It is history, which many of them enjoy. It provides stories and adventures which indicate various degrees of risk and courage. One of the best



courses for this age is Mary White's *The Old Testament and You*.<sup>17</sup> While it uses an outdated workbook approach, the material is suitable for reading and discussion. The subtitles are exciting: Abraham: "Must you do as the crowd does?" Jacob: "Do you know the green worm of jealousy?" Moses: "How do you get over an inferiority complex?" David: "Does popularity pay?" This group is ready for a brief introduction to Biblical scholarship, and often the documentary theory of the Pentateuch provides a fascinating account of how the Bible came to be. When properly presented, this approach to the origin of the Bible overcomes the conflict between science and religion before modern secularism can do any damage to the authority of Scripture. The Smith-Goodspeed *Short Bible*,<sup>18</sup> with its scholarly introductions, makes an excellent text for this course.

Moral decisions are crucial for intermediates. They are anxious to show their independence and yet they are dependent upon adults for their security and for guidance. If they can see the basic purpose of the Old Testament as a story of a covenant relationship, they can gain a perspective for their moral decisions. They have had the experience of being an individual within a community, and they can see how the individual found his own integrity in the group because the group had a covenant relationship with God. Out of this agreement came the law, and thus the norms for right and wrong are grounded in God's will for men. Intermediates, who are struggling with the problem of obligation and are asking, "Why should I?" can discover that the story of the covenant is Israel's way of asking the same question. Israel's community life was never strong enough to keep the agreement, just as men today fail. Yet God continued to love the Israelites, and finally sent Jesus Christ as *Act III* (Christ) of the story of our redemption.

<sup>17</sup> Louisville: Cloister Press, 1939.

<sup>18</sup> Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933, and Modern Library.

Intermediates know that whenever an agreement is broken, relationships deteriorate. When the by-laws of their club are forgotten, the club ceases to exist as it was. Whenever Israel forgot the covenant, the nation disintegrated. Amos promised that the Day of Yahweh would be darkness and not light because Israel had failed to keep her side of the agreement.

When the concrete language of the covenant story is made relevant in terms of the relationships of intermediates, they begin to discern the ways in which God is Lord of history. The Thanksgiving period, as we have said, is helpful in understanding God's creative power, but it also turns on God's covenant-making with his people. As they study Leonard Bacon's hymn, "O God, beneath thy guiding hand," there is this stanza:

"Laws, freedom, truth, and faith in God  
Came with those exiles o'er the waves;  
And where their pilgrim feet have trod,  
The God they trusted guards their graves."<sup>19</sup>

Israel felt about its exodus and covenant much as Americans feel about the pilgrims and the *Mayflower Compact*. And just as Yahweh worked through the renewal of the covenant during the many episodes in the Old Testament story, so we believe that God led Thomas Jefferson to see that "all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." Abraham Lincoln could look back to 1776 and say of it, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty. . . ." The revelation of Yahweh to Moses is the basis for our understanding the work of God in our own midst. The covenant relationship remains valid.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *The Hymnal* 1940 (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1943), No. 148, stanza 3.

<sup>20</sup> See Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (New York: Association Press, 1953), p. 19.

## HIGH SCHOOL

The adolescent stage which has just got under way with junior-highs gets into full flower in high school. New interests develop and these often point to a greater seriousness about the meaning of life. What will his vocation be? What are the possibilities of a happy marriage? Should he marry a Roman Catholic? What does science do to his faith? How about his secret sins? How can he get along with his parents? What can he do about anxiety and loneliness? How is the Bible relevant to such problems?

Take the problem of anxiety. He is familiar with the guilt anxiety as described in current psychiatry, and he sees himself as the cause of his failure to be his best self. He is aware of social anxiety, which is the chief driving power behind his urge to be one of the gang, to accept their standards no matter how foreign they may be to his former loyalties, and to line up with his age group against all others. If he betrays his group, his anxiety is increased. In extreme cases, these two types merge into a third, a neurotic anxiety that endangers his mental health. Behind all of these is what might be called spiritual anxiety, which is the threat of being nothing at all. It shows up in the fear of death, in exclusion from God's way of doing things, in meaninglessness of life. The tensions of economic conflict, immoral pressures, and atomic war are examples of today's spiritual anxiety. To this extent, spiritual anxiety is theological and is related to the doctrine of the covenant. He knows himself to be in relationship with his fellows and with God, and yet he knows that he has broken this relationship. He knows himself a sinner because he is disloyal to the God of the covenant, and he knows that the peer group which demands his loyalty is frequently disloyal as a group to the moral law. He comes very close to the wailing of the preacher that "all is futility" (Eccles. 1:2).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See William A. Spurrier, *Guide to the Christian Faith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 64-69.

The high-school student is capable of this kind of analysis, and he is able to trace the history of Israel for an answer. As he studies *Act II* (Covenant) of the drama of redemption, he finds hints of the answer in terms of God's redemptive activity in history. But he discovers that Israel is still looking for a Redeemer who will overcome these anxieties and that the demands of the law only increase them. It was the Lord Jesus who said, "Be not anxious" (Matthew 6:25; Luke 12:22), and only when the senior-high gets to *Act III* (Christ) and *Act IV* (Church) does he find the answer to his fundamental question. Because he looks at the Old Testament through the eyes of the New, he sees the hints to the answer in Second Isaiah's "suffering servant" and in Habakkuk's teaching that he is made upright by his faithfulness, but he does not find an adequate solution to his problem of how the lost shall be found and the dead shall be made alive until he knows himself to stand in *Act IV* of the drama as a member of the redemptive and sustaining community.

The high-school student may be willing to attack some objective problems, but normally he sees these problems in the light of his own situation. When he faces the idea of election, he is interested to know if the Jewish problem is alive in his own community. Then he will be concerned with the treatment of the Jews as the chosen people. The refrain,

"How odd  
Of God  
To choose  
The Jews,"

sums it up. The problem remains in the domain of mystery. It does no good to point out that the Jews were ready for this election and revelation, for at the beginning they were no more ready for it than any other people of their day. The election of the Hebrew people was an act of God's grace, just as the "new Israel" of the Church is an act of God's grace. But, because God has so

acted, we need to say with Pope Pius XII that "spiritually we are Semites."<sup>22</sup> Our Christian faith only makes sense when we see it as a Judeo-Christian tradition. The revelation of God through his mighty acts in the drama of redemption is a revelation to the Jews, and we are the inheritors of that revelation as it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Jewish problem today is complicated by all kinds of political and social and psychological factors, but the high-school student is capable of facing it as a theological issue, which is the only level on which it can be solved. The attitude of today's high-school student is to accept the Jew on a humanitarian basis of the democratic doctrine of equality, and this is good as far as it goes, but it is questionable whether it can stand up in times of stress. When we realize that the worst anti-Semitism in history occurred in the twentieth century, we know that we need more than the good will of high-school students toward each other. The religious debt of the Christian to the Jew is past all imagining, and without the old covenant the new covenant is meaningless. The hymn based on a Jewish doxology is pertinent here:

"The God of Abraham praise,  
Who reigns enthroned above;  
Ancient of everlasting days,  
And God of love;  
To him lift up your voice,  
At whose supreme command  
From earth we rise, and seek the joys  
At his right hand. . . .  
Hail, Abraham's God and mine! . . ."<sup>23</sup>

The covenant relationship of God to his people brings out clearly the social obligations of our faith. This is made especially clear in such eighth-century prophets as Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted by George Hedley, *The Christian Heritage in America* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1946), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 285.



Their concern for justice, especially to the person without influence, strikes a sympathetic note in the high-school student. The prophets, with their insights into the evils of society, are relevant at every age from about the fifth grade on, but at the high-school level the concern is more profound.

The best place to get at the student is through the contradiction between law and freedom. The tenth-grader is rebelling against authority as part of his striving for personal integrity and independence. Authority is still personalized in terms of parents and teachers, who are often seen simply as obstacles to his own free decisions. Law, as an impersonal form of this authority of an adult world, is frowned upon as a necessary nuisance. The moral law underlying the covenant between God and his people is not seen so much as a divine command as it is a thwarting of human desires. This conflict needs to be brought out into the open in terms of their own experiences before it makes sense in terms of history.

One approach to the meaning of freedom for high-school students is the analysis of a jazz band. The rhythm and melody are established, and within these limits the soloists are free to improvise on the theme. New musical ideas which are true to the basic emotional pattern are legitimate as long as they do not break either the rhythm or harmony. Solos, duets, and even collective improvisation contribute to the total effect, and the response of the audience adds to the impact of the music upon performers and listeners alike. Each performer becomes his own composer as he plays his variation on the theme, and therefore he is a creative artist within a corporate body. But if he breaks the pattern or plays in a different key or spoils the rhythm, the musical structure is broken and then the effect ceases to be good jazz.

The freedom of the jazz performer is valid only within an agreement among the players. They have a covenant relationship with each other. When anyone goes beyond the limits of this

freedom, he is no longer free. He is not a cooperating member of the community and is guilty of license.

All forms of community do not have a place for this kind of freedom, either within the Church or within the family or within the government. Some types of theology seek to call not only the tune but also to write the solos. Some families do not provide the degree of freedom that the adolescent needs in order to be a soloist. Some governments ban jazz bands and insist on music in a strait jacket. It is no accident that jazz was barred in Hitler's Germany and in Communist Russia.

God does not demand that all men be alike. Every man cannot play the trumpet like Louis Armstrong or the clarinet like Benny Goodman. Each man has his own abilities as his instrument, and some men may find the rhythm section more congenial than playing a trombone. We are called to different tasks.

The story of the covenant makes it clear that God sets the theme. Our response of faith to God's grace is to improvise in terms of our own aptitudes. We walk worthy of our vocation and use our creative imagination in his service. We find the theme in Micah's

"You have been told, O man, what is good,  
And what the LORD requires of you:  
Only to do justice, and to love kindness,  
And to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8,G).

and in Amos'

"But let justice roll down like waters,  
And righteousness like a perennial stream" (Amos 5:24,G).

and in Habakkuk's

"The righteous lives by reason of his faithfulness" (Hab. 2:4b,G).

This is God's structure, this is the theme of his orchestra. Within it, we have freedom to play our parts, to create our own impro-

visations, to adapt the tune to the city, country or backwoods, and to transcribe it for international relations.<sup>24</sup>

For the adolescent, there is the problem of who calls the tune. He sees that ultimately God establishes the theme, but he sees his parents and teachers limiting his right to improvise. He is facing the whole problem of freedom and authority, and part of the process of growing up is found in his power to discriminate at this point. The tenth-grade course in the *Seabury Series* takes this as its basic problem, and makes use of the covenant relationship and other factors in Biblical theology to clarify the issue.

The covenant relationship helps the teen-ager to face the problem of evil. The passage in Second Isaiah is the starting point, when against the background of the exile, he writes,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD,  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Is. 55:8-9, RSV).

God's faithfulness transcends anything that man can conceive. As Lord of history, God is working his purpose out, and our task is to face the problem in the light of our understanding of the suffering love of God. We may discover the meaning of God's suffering love in the midst of the death and war.<sup>25</sup> The real power of God expresses itself not in the power of creation but in his ability to take the consequences of man's sin and to refrain from taking away man's freedom because man has sunk to the level of license. Even before we get to the coming of Christ in *Act III* of the Bible drama, we see God's constant care for his people and his patience with their sins.

Young people discover that the world is not made to suit

<sup>24</sup> See my *Religion Makes Sense* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1950), pp. 89-95.

<sup>25</sup> See G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, *The Unutterable Beauty* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), p. 131.

their own fancy. One of the marks of their maturity comes from their realization that every problem cannot be solved on their own terms. They have to face the facts of grades, of not making the college of their choice, of having to accept a job that is uncongenial, of having to make economic adjustments, or of seeing their school team lose a championship event. They come up against the facts of popularity, election of office, being one of the gang. They see all too clearly their parents' shortcomings. And in many cases, there is nothing much they can do about it but take a big breath and keep on striving or accept the facts as they are. The covenant points to the fact that this is God's world and that God is in control of the historical process. Because they are members of the people of the covenant and therefore are part of the agreement between God and his people, they have certain obligations, and they are to use their freedom in faith to serve him.

They see the futility of all this, too, for without Jesus Christ there is no redemption. They cannot stop at this point in the Biblical story, for they are already in *Act IV* (Church) and are members of the people of the *new* covenant. They are not Jews subject to the *Torah* but Christians subject to Jesus Christ. But because Jesus Christ came to fulfill the law and the prophets, they can say,

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths" (Is. 2:3,RSV).

#### BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

There is a large gap in the story of Israel in most copies of the Bible. The last events recorded in the Old Testament occurred about 400 B.C. and the first events of the New Testament are just before the year 1 A.D. The latest book in the Old Testament was written about 165 B.C. The Jewish historian Josephus helps

us somewhat. We may get some help when the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls are interpreted. But much of this material has been readily available to us in the Apocrypha of the Old Testament.

We find in the Apocrypha historical accounts of the Maccabees, wisdom literature of a high order, a great prayer, detective fiction, and religious insights that make these books a bridge between the Testaments. This material provides a basis for understanding the Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots as portrayed in the New Testament. The legal religion of the Pharisees developed during this period. In the book of Judith we can see the fanatical extremes of devotion to the Law. There is a striking development of belief in life after death in some of this literature. II Esdras portrays the close connection between the Messiah and political action, and also provides a doctrine of original sin. There are great ethical insights in Ecclesiasticus and Tobit, and Tobit also presents insights into piety.

Although the Apocrypha do not have the same degree of inspiration as the rest of the Bible, there can be little doubt that the Holy Spirit was at work in this bridge between the Testaments.

Very little Church school material deals with the Apocrypha, but in any treatment of the grand sweep of the drama of redemption this connecting link between the Testaments should be present. It is doubtful if the sharp distinction between the canonical Old Testament and the Apocrypha existed in Jesus' time. Many Bibles published today contain the Apocrypha, and they are also printed separately.<sup>26</sup> Guidance for teachers is provided in several

<sup>26</sup> *The Complete Bible: An American Translation*, by J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), includes the Apocrypha. *Church School Bible* (Greenwich: Seabury Press) contains the King James version of the Apocrypha and 32 illustrations by Elsie Anna Wood. Some editions of the English and American Revised Versions include the English revised version of the Apocrypha. The Revised Standard Version is being published soon.



excellent books, but not in Church-school courses.<sup>27</sup> Certainly children will be both instructed and entertained by the world's earliest mystery story in *Bel and the Dragon*, and they will find in the writings of Jesus ben Sira (*Ecclesiasticus*) ethical insights of significance.

#### THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has aroused interest and curiosity. Scholars are evaluating the Scrolls and are attempting to discover what influence, if any, the monastery near the Dead Sea might have had on the origins of Christianity. The site was occupied between 100 B.C. and 70 A.D. Although some of the Biblical manuscripts may be older, the non-Biblical writings probably were written between 175 B.C. and 40 B.C. One of the earliest of the writings is the *Manual of Discipline*, but the exact dating of the other documents is still being questioned.<sup>28</sup>

The Dead Sea Scrolls are important. Millar Burrows has summarized the conclusions of the scholars. Chiefly, the Scrolls provide knowledge of the Jewish backgrounds during the period prior to Jesus' ministry. There are anticipations of Christianity in the Scrolls as there are in all Jewish writings. There are parallels to John the Baptist's ideas about baptism and about the coming of a Messiah, and John may have had some knowledge of the Qumran community.

Some scholars believe they can find parallels also between Jesus and the teacher of righteousness mentioned in the *Habak-*

<sup>27</sup> Two popular treatments are Robert C. Dentan, *The Apocrypha, Bridge of the Testaments* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1954), and Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Story of the Apocrypha* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939). More technical are Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), and Charles C. Torrey, *The Apocryphal Literature: A Brief Introduction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

<sup>28</sup> Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1955), p. 223.

kuk Commentary, and insofar as Jesus was a prophet, both of them fit the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament, but the teacher of righteousness was not thought of as the Messiah. The differences between Jesus' teachings and those of the Qumran community are more striking than the similarities.

Coming from the same period in history, it is not surprising that the early Church and the Qumran sect had similar practices of worship and of community life. Occasionally, the parallels in their teachings are striking, as in the insistence that we are vindicated by God's righteousness. Burrows quotes the concluding psalm of the Manual of Discipline,

"And in his steadfast love he will bring my  
vindication.

In his faithful righteousness he has judged me,  
and in the abundance of his goodness he will  
forgive all my iniquities."<sup>29</sup>

Faith in the teacher of righteousness is important in order to attain salvation, but "there is no implication in the Dead Sea Scrolls that the teacher of righteousness had himself accomplished a redemptive work in any way comparable to the saving work of Christ."<sup>30</sup> The Damascus Document never lets anyone think he can be saved by faith alone, but only by faith plus keeping the law.

Much more of the Dead Sea Scrolls are reflected in some ways in other New Testament writings, but nothing is direct enough to prove any connection, although of course there is no reason to deny that John the Baptist, Jesus, or some of the early Christians may have known of the sect or have been in contact with it. Millar Burrows' conclusion is significant, "For myself, I must . . . confess that, after studying the Dead Sea Scrolls for seven years, I do not find my understanding of the New Testament substantially affected. Its Jewish background is clearer and better under-

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

stood, but its meaning has neither been changed nor significantly clarified. . . . Perhaps the best thing the Dead Sea Scrolls can do for us is to make us appreciate our Bible all the more by contrast.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CHRIST

AS WE look at the drama of redemption recorded in the Bible, it might be likened to an hourglass. We see that it begins on the broadest possible basis, narrows down to a covenant with one people, centers in one person, then widens out to the new community, and finally reaches toward all mankind. These are the acts in the same redemptive process which is universal at both creation and the final goal, but which is limited to one man at the center. The mid-point of the redemptive process has a universal outreach so that "the narrowing reaches its climax for the sake of the redemption of all."<sup>1</sup>

The Old Testament has already taught us that God is at work in history and that there is an element of salvation within God's historical acts. God's creative powers as revealed in the creation are at the same time redemptive acts. In the fullness of time, at the mid-point in history, God sent his Son, and in this new covenant the Old Testament takes on new meaning. The nations were waiting and all history up to that time was a preparation for the coming of Christ.<sup>2</sup> Paul recounts that history as he remembers how God led the people out of Egypt, gave them land,

<sup>1</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 178. See Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith Today* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), pp. 21-22. For a different view, see Erich Dinkler, "Earliest Christianity," in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Robert C. Dentan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 171-214.

<sup>2</sup> See Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), pp. 231-239.

judges, prophets and kings, and, finally, following the preparation by John the Baptist, sent mankind a Savior.<sup>3</sup>

### JESUS CHRIST

Jesus of Nazareth steps onto the stage of history in the fullness of time. His life, death, and resurrection were acts of God. We need to see that the important point is what God has done in and through Christ. This is what stands out clearly in the Gospel story and in the remainder of the New Testament. The "Christ event" is the total impact of God's redeeming act on all mankind. It is the mid-point of history which gives meaning to all history. It is the fullness and not the end of time. The Gospels are confessions of faith, written after the resurrection and the establishment of the Christian community to strengthen the faith of others.

Just as *Act II* was the story of a covenant, told and retold in many different ways, through Jesus Christ there was a new covenant. At the Last Supper Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24, RSV).<sup>4</sup> This is the act by which the believer becomes heir to the promises given to Israel, for he is a member of the *new* Israel.

After the resurrection, the early followers knew that Jesus was their Savior because they knew themselves to be saved through faith in him. They had experienced reconciliation and had become grafted onto the Body of Christ. They were a "new humanity." But they also remembered their former estrangement from God and knew that their redemption had been made possible by the act of God in Christ. They had not redeemed themselves and they knew that this was impossible.

Paul made the most thorough-going analysis of man's condition. He described man's predicament as spiritual death, and he turned to the Old Testament for help. The story of the creation and the fall illuminated the broken relationship between man

<sup>3</sup> See Acts 13:17-23.

<sup>4</sup> This passage is missing in the parallel in Luke 22:20 in RSV.



and God. Man had rebelled against God, and sin is the demonic spirit of disloyalty or disobedience. Sin is something that can take possession of us, and we cannot expel it through our own powers. Man is a slave to sin. Not just individuals but the whole human race is inextricably caught in the rebellion against God, and this leads to "death," to being "lost," to separation from God. Man has no power of himself to bring about a healing of broken relationships with other men or with God.

The divine righteousness has been outraged by man's attitude, for while man is helpless to escape from sin, his imprisonment is his own responsibility. Paul describes this with brutal honesty: "They gave up God: and God therefore gave them up. . . . These men deliberately forfeited the Truth of God and accepted a Lie, paying homage and giving service to the creature instead of to the Creator, Who alone is worthy to be worshipped for ever and ever, Amen. . . . Moreover, since they considered themselves too high and mighty to acknowledge God, He allowed them to become slaves of their degenerate minds, and to perform unmentionable deeds. . . . More than this—being well aware of God's pronouncement that all who do these things deserve to die, they not only continued in their own practices, but made no bones about giving their thorough approval to others who did the same" (Romans 1:24, 25, 28, 32,P).

The demands of the Law and the threat of punishment are never enough to deter men and the attempt only leads to wretchedness, so that all seems to end in futility. The Law provides the despair of the ego and is a prelude to the faith which can accept God's grace. Man is guilty before God and is subject to the penalty of death, and yet through faith in Christ he may be forgiven. God is not responsible for the situation, although in his Providence he has permitted men to be free. Man's freedom has not made this predicament inevitable, but man's use of his freedom has led unswervingly to this separation from God. Throughout history God has acted to redeem men, but the Law and the

prophets have served only to emphasize the separation. At the last, God has acted through Jesus Christ to bring about reconciliation.

This is not the whole of the Church's teaching about Jesus Christ, but it is the center of the drama of redemption. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, these relationships are made abundantly clear.

The important thing about these beliefs is that they resulted from the experience of the early Christians. From the time of the resurrection, the disciples knew that they were in a new relationship with the risen Christ and with each other and that they did not deserve this gift. From the moment of Paul's conversion, he knew himself to be in a new relationship with the living Christ, and above all men he did not deserve it. As men have felt their "hearts strangely warmed" throughout history, they have known that God has acted in and through them in ways that they had not earned.

As men meditated upon the cross and resurrection, they saw in it the complete unity of justice and love. The price of their reconciliation was more than man could pay, and God had paid it. The atonement meant that they were "at-one" with God and their fellows. Various theories arose to explain this atonement, the chief one for many centuries being the idea of a ransom, although Paul also wrote of satisfaction, sacrifice, defeat of sin, and perfect obedience, all of which were metaphors and none of which adequately explained the mystery. The *act itself* was the significant thing, and it was part of the experience of the early Church. The relationship between God and man had been restored because of the impact of Jesus Christ on history.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> John Knox, *Christ the Lord* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1945), pp. 118-123, offers a clear summary of these points. See also Alan Richardson, ed., *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 185-187.

## THE CROSS

The chief concern of the earliest Christians was to explain the cross. It stood out in the early preaching because it was central in the disciples' experience. It was a source of power which transformed them so that they could become "ambassadors of Christ." It was the symbol of God's love, for "the proof of God's amazing love is this: that it was *while we were sinners* that Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8,P). The cross also shows us man's highest possibilities and lowest depths, for in this one act we see the perfect man suffering for those who condemned him, and we see the depth of sin in men who put an innocent man to death.

Above all, it is the cross combined with the resurrection which provides the *motif* of Christian faith. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3,KJ). "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17,KJ). "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20,RSV). Such words as frustration, loneliness, separation, and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23,KJ) are ways of expressing man's predicament. Being "born anew," becoming a "new creature," or "Christ lives in me" expresses the integration of the person, the renewal of community, the reconciliation, and the new life in Christ which comes to those who have faith.

Faith and repentance are not redemptive in themselves. There is no magic by which we can compel God's grace. Yet when we yield ourselves to Christ, seeking new life through him so that his death becomes our sacrifice, we share his death in order that we may share his resurrection. This is the changed relationship with God and our fellows which results from God's suffering and forgiving love at work in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), pp. 177-187.

## WHAT WAS DONE

In order for us to see the manner in which God saves man through Jesus Christ, the effectiveness of what was done needs to be made clear. Herbert H. Farmer suggests three significant elements: (1) the real nature of the personal world, (2) what right relations between persons are, and (3) a historic personal life.<sup>7</sup>

The meaning of life is found primarily in personal relationships. Martin Buber's insistence on the "I-Thou" relationship means primarily that every individual is to treat persons as ends and things as means and that behind the human personal relationship stands a personal relationship with God. When the relationship between persons is broken, both of them find that there is a barrier in their relationship with God. We discover that other persons have a claim on us, and that God's claim on us is channeled through our relationships with persons. Men seek to maintain and restore these relationships through impersonal forces, such as law and ceremonial. The traditionally pictured Pharisee is opposed to the Gospel because he seeks to find his salvation through a formula or system and ends up by depersonalizing his religion. The Sadducee is opposed to the Gospel because he seeks peace for himself through compromise. He avoids problems wherever possible and finds contentment through not being bothered. Judgment is avoided by denying the resurrection.<sup>8</sup>

## GOD'S LOVE

The right relationships between persons cannot be achieved either through law or through avoiding the basic issues of life. The center of the Gospel is God's love, and as this love becomes

<sup>7</sup> See Herbert H. Farmer, *God and Men* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), pp. 112-118.

<sup>8</sup> See Charles D. Kean, *Making Sense Out of Life* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 62-68, for an examination of the Sadducee and Pharisee.

available to men through grace, interpersonal relationships become possible in community. Law provides structure for the community but does not answer the ultimate problem of reconciliation. Law provides a basis for judgment on personal relations, but only love resolves the conflicts.

This is seen clearly in the love of God revealed in Christ. This love is revealed in creation as well as in the incarnation, for God's "love is the power to grant freedom without desiring to limit or inhibit its exercise." The love of God revealed in the Bible reaches its climax in Christ. D. R. Davies combines it with God's omnipotence, for "*only omnipotence . . . can refrain absolutely from trespassing upon freedom*. Only God can give and not take back. . . . He suffers in Himself the entire consequence of allowing man absolute freedom. That is His love. It is also His omnipotence, which may be defined as the will and capacity to endure everything that man may inflict upon God through the exercise of his freedom."<sup>9</sup> While this has always been true, it breaks through to men as God acts through Jesus Christ. The cross stands as the symbol of the omnipotent love of God.

"Our sins, not thine, thou bearest, Lord,  
Make us thy sorrow feel,  
Till through our pity and our shame  
Love answers love's appeal."<sup>10</sup>

This gift of freedom which leads to the death of Christ on the cross suggests that God can be defeated. In taking the consequences of man's sin, God suffers. But this does not mean that God's ultimate purposes are thwarted. William James, in one of his insights, suggests that life might be compared to a chess game. The master player cannot foresee the specific plays of his adversaries, but he knows all the possible moves and knows in advance how to meet any move that might be made. So no matter

<sup>9</sup> D. R. Davies, *Down Peacock Feathers* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> F. Bland Tucker, *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 68, stanza 2. By permission of the Church Pension Fund.



how devious the course, in the end the expert wins.<sup>11</sup> The Biblical claim that God is the Lord of history, a personal being who can make decisions as the processes of history unfold, a God of love who enters personal relations with his creatures, and a God who sent Jesus Christ that all mankind might be redeemed, is like the master chess player. He could not even be checked by the crucifixion, for it was followed by the resurrection.

The Biblical doctrine of redemption stands at the center of the drama which the Bible tells. It is the climax although it is not the end. The atonement made possible by Jesus Christ is available to mankind through faith in him, and by God's grace we are "at-one" with God and with mankind in our personal relationships. "With his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5,RSV,KJ).

#### THE PERSON OF CHRIST

While the major impact of the atonement was that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Corinthians, 5:19,KJ), there was a genuine incarnation as "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14,RSV).

In order to understand this act of God as a true incarnation, we need to emphasize the life of Jesus. God acted in a particular human being, who appeared in history at a given time and about whom we know a good deal. Donald Baillie suggests that followers of Karl Barth do not take the incarnation seriously when they belittle the Jesus of history.<sup>12</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, representing this view, reflects theological presuppositions more than he does historical scholarship. Perhaps we can place more reliance on the portraits of Jesus found in more conventional but equally scholarly examinations of the sources.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See William James, *The Will to Believe* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1897), pp. 181-183.

<sup>12</sup> Donald M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), pp. 34-39; see pp. 30-58.

<sup>13</sup> See Pierson Parker, "The Jesus of History Today," in *Christianity and the Contemporary Scene*, ed. by Randolph C. Miller and Henry H. Shires

On the other hand, it is impossible to discover, without doing violence to the available records, a Jesus of history who is not also the Christ of faith. A naturalistic bias is as dangerous as a skeptical one. The earliest documents according to any theory of the origin of the Gospels present Jesus as the Christ. Mark opens with "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The earliest baptismal formula was, "I believe that Jesus is the Messiah."<sup>14</sup>

The Gospel record makes it clear that Jesus was fully human. He was like us in his needs and temptations. He was limited in his knowledge of history and in his expectations for the future. He developed in a normal way from an infant to an adult, and the one picture of his boyhood preserves an episode of typical adolescence, although with an underlying purpose which is foreign to most twelve-year-olds. He admitted he did not know when the kingdom was coming, and when he made a prophecy about the end of the age he was wrong. He prayed that he would not have to die.

But no reading of the Gospels stops at this point. The birth stories make it evident that this man who was born of a woman was not like ourselves. The temptations deal with bigger issues than we face, and Jesus' decision was in terms of a special mission we do not share. We see him as consistently obedient to the Father, and therefore we say he is without sin. Whatever may have been his view of his Messianic mission, we see him as the Messiah. His power to perform miracles and the authority of his teachings stamp him as different from other men. His messiahship was veiled, and only after his resurrection were the disciples con-

(New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1943), pp. 45-60; also Chester C. McCown, *The Search for the Real Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), John Knox, *The Man Christ Jesus* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), Wallace E. and Marion B. Rollins, *Jesus and His Ministry* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1954).

<sup>14</sup> See my *The Clue to Christian Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 19-28, for a similar treatment.

vinced. The Gospels reflect the faith of the Church that Jesus is the Christ. When the Gospels are read in faith, we also see him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Word made flesh. We cannot prove it. All we can prove is that the essence of the belief of the early Church was that Jesus was their Savior.

The non-believer has the same factual information, and in general he accepts the story of Jesus' existence with modifications in terms of his naturalistic or other type of bias. Warner Fite ends the story with Jesus' death when "it was revealed to him that his messiahship had never been more than a delusion and a dream."<sup>15</sup> Joseph Klausner, who handles the materials in a conservative manner, is sympathetic in treating the resurrection as a vision, but he does not believe the bulk of the Jewish nation could accept such a vision as the cornerstone of its faith.<sup>16</sup> From the first, the appearances of the risen Lord were seen only by believers. Emil Brunner suggests that the resurrection is not *public* history but is an intrusion from the beyond limited to a selected group.<sup>17</sup> But for this group the event was historical and from it came the development of a new community.

The *incarnation* gets its meaning and content from the account of Jesus' life in the Synoptic Gospels and from the interpretation this life receives in the Johannine and Pauline materials. The theological term is derived from "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). In Jesus we meet the same fundamental reality that we meet in God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. God and man are one in him.

We do not therefore say, "God is like Christ," or "Christ was like God," but we say that we *know and meet God* because he

<sup>15</sup> Warner Fite, *Jesus the Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), p. 87.

<sup>16</sup> See Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1925), pp. 356-359.

<sup>17</sup> See Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), pp. 328-329.

has acted in creation and in the covenant, and he has revealed himself fully in Jesus Christ.

The deity of Jesus is God acting in him.<sup>18</sup> The totality of Jesus' impact on man is the full force of the divine forgiveness, the revelation of the God who seeks to redeem mankind through all that he does. The event of Jesus Christ points back to the beginning and forward to the second coming, for the same God is revealed in all the acts of the drama of redemption. *Act III* (Christ) is the fulfillment of *Acts I* (Creation) and *II* (Covenant), but it is also the foundation for *Acts IV* (Church) and *V* (Consummation).

Throughout Jesus' life he is a member of a community. He inherits his membership in the covenant community of Israel. He is the center of the community of his disciples. He becomes the foundation of the new community of "the way." He is the central figure in the coming kingdom. Yet he is always in an ambivalent relationship to the community. The *motif* is that of separation and reconciliation, of withdrawal and return. He is born in a royal line, but his birth takes place in a manger. He is welcomed by shepherds and astrologers, but he has to escape to Egypt. He is received by John's baptism, but he withdraws to the wilderness and faces his temptation alone. He gathers his disciples around him, but faces the fact of his coming death on the mount of Transfiguration. He meets with his disciples for a last supper before going to Gethsemane and on to his death. He appears as their risen Lord, and withdraws at the Ascension. Except for the hope of the second coming, Arnold Toynbee finds this *motif* at work in many religions. The hope of Christ's second coming raises the withdrawal-and-return *motif* to its highest level and carries us into *Act V* (Consummation) of the drama. As Toynbee applies this *motif* to individuals and societies, the relevance of the Chris-

<sup>18</sup> See W. Norman Pittenger, *Christ and Christian Faith* (New York: Round Table Press, 1941), p. 45.

tian Gospel of death followed by new life, of lostness followed by redemption, is made clear on every level of existence.<sup>19</sup>

The community from the beginning shared this pattern. It shared in the sufferings of Christ; it discovered that it had his power and authority; it found itself an outcast from the world; it continued the covenant-meal as a token of brotherhood in the presence of the Risen Lord; and through the resurrection it found its community strong enough to face "the gates of hell."

*Act III* (Christ) in the drama of redemption is the turning point of history. It is the climax of the drama of redemption. It is the assurance of victory. But we do not live in *Act III*, which ended with the coming of the Church. We live in *Act IV* (Church) and are the inheritors of all that has happened by God's acts in history. But *Act IV* only has meaning if we remember, in the full sense of the term, the events and their meanings for us. The Church and the Bible exist to help us remember and to provide the community in which the redemptive acts of God are realized in daily life.

#### CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The power of Jesus Christ to enlist the loyalty of many followers is evident. Normally, this takes place through the Church, for Christ is known through the community of believers. But the figure of Jesus Christ is such "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:10,KJ). The purpose of Christian education is that "everyone should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, and thus glorify God the Father" (Phil. 2:11,G). "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves those who are his children" (I John 5:1,G). "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever has not the Son has not life" (I John 5:12,G).

The starting point for Christian education is the realization

<sup>19</sup> See Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, abridgement by D. C. Somervell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 220-224.



that the historical Jesus is the Christ, that we come into communion with God through faith in him, who was the incarnate Son of the Father. The Church that lives in terms of this faith and the teacher who shares it are ready to teach the children.

The Gospel of redemption is learned by sharing in the redeeming relationships within community life. As a child grows, he experiences those relationships and learns the pattern of Biblical living first of all in the family. Or he may learn that he is rejected and unloved, and he sees no hope for his present situation. He knows no history and cannot think in terms of doctrine, but he is experiencing ways of responding to the love of God insofar as God is revealed in his family relationships. The real task of Christian education at this point is to help our families create the relationships in the home which will help children meet their basic needs for love and acceptance, for an orderly structure of home life, of the opportunity to grow, and for a sense of the mystery of God. This is learned from his relationships rather than from any formal teaching or indoctrination.

#### NURSERY

As we turn to the nursery child, we find that his needs are met on a very simple basis. He needs security within the framework of home and classroom, a simple and dependable structure of life, opportunities to exercise his body and to satisfy his curiosity, and a rather vague sense of mystery. *How he feels* in the classroom is more important than any words, except as words reinforce the pleasant feeling. He knows he is at Church, and within the Church he knows he belongs. He may learn something about Jesus, but only in terms of brief incidents. He loves fantasy and imaginative tales, but he is limited because he knows nothing of magi, shepherds, sheep, wicked kings, and the location of Egypt. Even the Christmas story is for him primarily a story of mother love. But isn't mother love crucial at this point? The establishment of a relationship of love is the significant thing. The teacher will do

better by emulating the attitude of Jesus toward the children than by telling the story, although it is perfectly proper to relate the incident of Jesus as a kind man who loved children.

The difficulty of reading stories about Jesus at this age is described by Ethel Smither. At first, she and a little girl looked at the pictures which were explained in a sentence or two. Later on, the stories were read aloud. By the time she was six, she said, "I've heard it all." When she was nine, she picked up the book and read it avidly. She was asked if she remembered how they used to read the stories and look at the pictures, and she said, "No. Did we read them? I knew you gave me the book a long time ago."<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most important element in a nursery class is to have a man among the teachers. Basil Yeaxlee writes that if we want to teach the Fatherhood of God, we must build on the child's idea of fatherhood. His own father is the crucial person in the language of relationships, but the symbol may be caught by association with a man in the earliest experiences of Church life. The masculine element in religion and the picture of Jesus as a man are fortified by the presence of a man as the class goes through its activities.<sup>21</sup>

#### KINDERGARTEN

The stories that are told in kindergarten may provide awe and mystery, myth and legend, for this is the age of fantasy. By these means the child finds reality, something which does not result from the use of abstract words. Brief stories that catch and fire the imagination reassure him of his security in a world which is growing too large for him. The stories may come from history, but they cannot be presented historically. We have already indicated the severe limitation of the use of Old Testament sources with the

<sup>20</sup> Ethel Smither, *The Use of the Bible with Children* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1937), pp. 68-69.

<sup>21</sup> See Basil A. Yeaxlee, *Religion and the Growing Mind* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1952), pp. 57-58.

kindergarten age, but some of the stories in the Gospels may be told or retold, although it is necessary to be careful lest the child become bored with "too much Jesus." Dorothy Kunhardt's *Once There Was a Little Boy*<sup>22</sup> is particularly effective with five- and six-year-olds.

The important resource for teaching the youngest children is for the teacher to have both a sound Biblical theology and a right relationship with God. Little children ask questions, and the answers are not usually to be found in the teacher's manual. The questions are genuine and deserve careful answers in terms the children can understand. The way in which the answer is given is just as important as the content, and a sound "relationship theology" is the only protection the teacher has. When a five-year-old asks, "Why did Jesus die?" the answer must be in terms of factual information within the grasp of the child, but it must also express the attitude of the teacher toward the child and communicate something of Christian faith in the face of death. The teacher who can distinguish the difference between casual curiosity and the real theological predicament of the small child knows that the whole meaning of the Gospel is involved here, for the Gospel is God's answer to man's need in the face of death in all its aspects. The "new life" of the Gospel, as symbolized by the resurrection, is relevant to the security and faith of the child.

#### PRIMARY

Children in the first two grades may be read to from the Bible, preferably from some of the modern translations. They cannot read anything for themselves except in special circumstances. They are ready to hear more stories about Jesus and about how the Church began, but they still lack any historical sense and most teaching is episodic. They are growing out of the desire for fantasy and are seeking facts. Between the ages of six and eight great changes take place, and the primary question becomes, "Is it true?"

<sup>22</sup> New York: Viking Press, 1946.

They are beginning to stand on their own feet and to adjust to a wider world. They are hunting for a new kind of security, now that home is not their only base. By the age of nine, this process is well under way, and they are finding sources of power which help them.

The emphasis in teaching about Jesus is that he was a kind man sent by God. They are acquainted with some of the events in his life. They know that bad people killed him and that he still lives. The crucifixion does not shock them too much, but they have trouble understanding the resurrection. They cannot help being exposed to these facts if they are truly members of the congregation, but if we isolate them and restrict them to a private room of their own they will never believe even if we tell them.

#### THIRD AND FOURTH GRADE

Third- and fourth-graders, as we said in the last chapter, like to read if they are able to do so. The teacher needs to be careful not to put slow readers in embarrassing situations, and yet the desire to read must not be thwarted. Well-written stories from the Bible are still more likely to communicate than the Bible text itself, but they can read some of the simpler stories about Jesus. The danger at this point is that they will come to know Jesus as a man and nothing more! They may be familiar with the elements of wonder in the Gospels, especially the birth stories, the miracles, and the resurrection, but for many children of this age that makes Jesus a super magician rather than a Savior.

Attempts to communicate the deeper meanings of the atonement and incarnation are thwarted by the inadequate vocabularies and concepts of this age. Jesus is either a superman or a God disguised as a man, either a prophet or someone who fooled the people by "seeming" to be a man. This problem needs to be faced, although there is no clear-cut solution.

Most likely the answer may be suggested in the worshipping life

of the congregation, for when children share the assumptions of a congregation that worships Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and finds him as their Redeemer in the preaching of the word and the reception of the Lord's Supper, they intuit the relationship even when they cannot understand it. The child who worships with his parents and his teacher recognizes that *they* accept Jesus as Lord. The child who hears prayers addressed to God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and who sings "Holy, holy, holy. . . . God in three persons, blessed Trinity," may not have an intellectual understanding of the mystery, but the Church's way of worship rubs off on him. Explanations do not help much at this point, but example does.

#### JUNIORS

Juniors, especially those eleven and twelve, have a new set of concerns. They are anxious about their social status, their place in the gang, and their growing integrity apart from the home. They live in a secular society where even the great feast days of the Christian year are seen through non-religious eyes. They have grown up in a culture in which Santa Claus has outrated Jesus Christ at Christmas time. An experiment with boys of this age showed that their religious knowledge was either extremely elementary or was parroted from catechisms. Finger painting, clay modeling, visiting a Church, and recorded answers to questions showed for the most part a watered down adult version of Christianity which had no relationship to the needs of the boys. Traditional Bible study has not solved the problem, for in most Church schools the Bible is taught at this junior age, and the results are far from satisfactory.

Most children of this age are inarticulate when talking of God or Jesus or sin. The best they can do is something like this: God is "a wonderful person—a thing in the sky, who can't be seen; but he can see you, and he makes us all do different things." God is



confused with Jesus, as in the following comment: "They killed God and put him in a tunnel. The guards heard thunder, the rock moved; they didn't see him but he went up to heaven."<sup>23</sup>

The teaching of Christianity has usually bogged down in the impartation of factual knowledge that is irrelevant to the junior's problem, in the encouragement of moral maxims in a vacuum, and in the insistence on attendance at worship services which frankly bore him. The problem is to make factual knowledge, character development, and membership in the Church relevant to his basic needs. This is extremely difficult.

There is plausibility in the suggestion that the basic *motif* of the New Testament be used with juniors. The central act of the drama of redemption is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is worked out in many forms in the parables of Jesus and in the letters of Paul in terms of spiritual death and resurrection. Jesus placed these concepts together in the story of the Prodigal Son: "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24a, RSV, KJ). In other words, he was separated from his family and community, and now he has been freely forgiven and has been restored to status within the family. Paul spoke of being "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11, RSV). He said "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) so that one's relationship with the community is broken. The symbolism of baptism in terms of rebirth is "being buried with Christ in his death" that one "may also be partaker of his resurrection." Therefore "this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church."<sup>24</sup> Sin is always separation from one's fellows and from God due to rebellion and disloyalty, and salvation is always organic membership in a unified body of faithful people and a gracious personal relationship with God.

<sup>23</sup> From findings of the New Haven Y.M.C.A. experiment conducted by H. Parker Lansdale, Jr.

<sup>24</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 280. Paul uses this analogy to explain the atonement.

If these are the relationships at the center of the Gospel, surely they are relevant to the problems of a child between nine and twelve years. The lack of morale in school, which causes the pupils to feel rejected and unwanted is a standard problem facing this age. It is demonstrated by students who, when they draw pictures of their teachers, make them as ugly as possible, or portray them being kicked in the shins or on the hindside. There is withdrawal, but it is not the free withdrawal of independence. It is rejection and subsequent withdrawal.

The gang treatment is similar. The constant formation and re-formation of gangs at this stage leads to many hurt feelings. Sometimes the rejection is of short duration, or is compensated by acceptance in another group. But there are those who through rejection seek to withdraw further in order not to be hurt. While this is mainly a concern of the community and is governed by the nature of community, it also is relevant to an understanding of Jesus Christ as their Savior. The Gospel story of redemption speaks directly to their needs, and they can understand how the prophets were stoned and Jesus was betrayed and abandoned to his fate.

There is a danger here that the Gospel story may provide an escape from the facts of life. There is not always enough maturity at this age to understand how Jesus can be their Savior, and yet the security and status provided by acceptance in the Christian community may be a real beginning of conscious Christian commitment. They can be helped by coming to know those heroes of the faith who found strength through Christ to meet their persecutions and rejections. They learn that the law is no protection against rejection and that it does not matter how "good" one is. They find that the decisions of their own lives *now* depend on their attitudes toward their relationships. They can go sulk when they are rejected; they can bemoan their fate when they are not popular; they can blame others for the shortcomings of the group. But they may come to see that they can accept their rejections and their successes with the group because Christ gives them a

security and status that the gang or school or family cannot destroy. Juniors normally do not achieve this maturity of faith, but they can be started in the right direction.

There are well-adjusted boys and girls of junior age. Some of the problems we have suggested hardly appear until junior-high or senior-high age. But the roots are in the junior age for most of them. The well-adjusted ones have a different kind of problem. Because their adjustment often is on a purely secular level, they are satisfied with themselves and with their environment. They find that they are popular with all their peers and with their elders, and therefore they see no need for either security or status outside their secular world. They need to have their complacency disturbed, so that they can break their secular bonds and grow toward Christian maturity.

Other seemingly well-adjusted juniors have found ways of adjusting to external groups without overcoming their inner insecurity. They tend to disguise this inner lack in various ways, but they rely entirely on external sources for their stability. This is shown by the joiners who have to belong to every club in the vicinity, by those who are lost when they have to rely on their own resources in solitude, or by those who are followers and never show any real initiative of their own. The extremely cooperative and "wishy-washy" children are often in greater need of the redemptive power of the Gospel than the lively non-cooperators.

There are some who have made their adjustments to life in terms of sound relationships. They have a background of love and acceptance and they understand in their own way that ultimately God provides both their status and their security. They may not be able to express themselves in adequate theological terms, but they have found in their homes and Church the beginnings of that peace which passes understanding. It can and does happen that boys and girls go through this period with a profound sense of thanksgiving to Almighty God for all their blessings. They may not be the most popular children in their gangs, and they may

have to suffer rejection from time to time, but they know that they are growing in grace.

It is the Christian faith that there is an answer for children of this age as well as for adults. The human predicament is common to all men. The problem of the leader of juniors is to discover those relationships through which the eternal truths of the Gospel may be taught. History and geography are just opening up for juniors. The broad sweep of the drama of redemption can at last be seen in its broad outlines in terms of the events by which God has revealed himself. They will read books about the Bible and about Jesus, including such works as Norman Langford's *The King Nobody Wanted*,<sup>25</sup> Mary Alice Jones' *His Name Was Jesus*,<sup>26</sup> and W. Russell Bowie's *The Bible Story for Boys and Girls*.<sup>27</sup> They will do research in the Bible and will work with a concordance. But we should expect this to be done on a superficial level, and some of us will be satisfied if they get the chronology straight and gain only a little insight into the meaning that Jesus Christ has for them. Such a hymn as James Montgomery's will help:

“When Jesus left his Father’s throne,  
He chose an humble birth;  
Like us, unhonored and unknown,  
He came to dwell on earth.  
Like him may we be found below,  
In wisdom’s path of peace;  
Like him in grace and knowledge grow,  
As years and strength increase.”<sup>28</sup>

#### CONFIRMATION AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

At the end of this period, at the age of twelve, many denominations expect that boys and girls will make a profession of faith

<sup>25</sup> Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949.

<sup>26</sup> Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press.

<sup>27</sup> Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press.

<sup>28</sup> *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 331.

or be confirmed. In some cases, the stability and willingness to learn of those ten- or eleven-year-olds make the earlier age seem desirable. This involves not only an understanding of who Jesus was and what he did but also an acceptance of him as Lord and Savior. Certain factual knowledge is often required as a basis for commitment.

On a purely intellectual level, the preadolescent can learn the required words but only in rare instances will he have adequate understanding. He is pulled by his emotions as his whole being tends to express a master sentiment which will unify his life. When the local parish is a redemptive community and when he knows himself as an accepted member of the congregation, his deepest desire may be to commit himself to the Lord of the Church.

There should be nothing perfunctory about this. With all the pressures of today's living and with all the vital secular appeals to youngsters, confirmation does not always seem very exciting or important. When rebellion has become the pattern in the home, as it so often does in the early 'teens, refusal to accept the discipline of instruction is a typical response. It is easier to capture the interests of those eleven or twelve than it is to appeal to early teen-agers. If confirmation is postponed until later adolescence, at the end of high school, more knowledge can be absorbed, but the commitment will be much the same. The statistically minded churches will not like this postponement, however, for it will result in fewer members.

Instruction for confirmation or joining the Church, whether at the age of eleven or twelve or at a later age, should last long enough to be effective. I would like to see the information made relevant to the young person's growing needs, so that he would understand his commitment as an act of his total personality. I would like to see him build on his experiences of redemption in his home and Church, so that he would know that he is "loving him who first loved me." The basic *motif* of cross and resurrection, of death and life, of loneliness and acceptance, could be brought



out in many ways. The necessary knowledge of the Bible, of Church history, of the Church's worship, of the organization of the denomination, and all other factual information could be related to the ways in which Jesus Christ has served as Lord and Master of men and women, boys and girls, white and black, free man and slave, through all the ages of the Church's history. He may lack full understanding and it is good if he knows that he is still ignorant, but he is ready for an act of commitment.

"I know not how that Bethlehem's babe  
Could in the Godhead be;  
I only know the manger child  
Has brought God's life to me.  
I know not how that Calvary's cross  
A world from sin could free;  
I only know its matchless love  
Has brought God's love to me.  
I know not how that Joseph's tomb  
Could solve death's mystery;  
I only know a living Christ,  
Our immortality."<sup>29</sup>

#### JUNIOR HIGH

The problem of education for commitment carries us into genuine adolescence, as we look at the intermediates or junior-high age. They read widely and rapidly, are capable of some critical analysis, and can maintain interest *if* they want to. Eruptions of physical development, changing voices, and instability of personality are typical. It is no wonder that G. Stanley Hall called adolescence "the age of temporary insanity." They are dreaming of their future and of the girl or boy next door. They are following various hobbies, changing moods for no good reason, being shy one minute and aggressive the next, demanding freedom and

<sup>29</sup> Harry Webb Farrington, *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 330. Used with the permission of Mrs. Harry W. Farrington.

needing understanding, and refusing to be communicative even with their own parents. They need love and often reject it. They want assistance, but only when they ask for it.

They are capable of great loyalties, and we see some parishes that can capture them, usually in a group. They will give themselves with abandon, and while this enthusiasm is usually short-lived, their sincerity is not open to question. They are in a no-man's land between childhood and maturity, accentuated by the lengthening of the education and maturing process of our culture, and few congregations have a theology for this middle period. The adult services are too mature and the Church school services are too childish, and neither is relevant to their needs.

They have either made a commitment or are ready for a decision. Their need for a master sentiment is such that if the Church does not provide a live option, they will give themselves to something less. The person of Jesus Christ stands as a challenge, for in him adolescents find stability and status, meaning and purpose. They do not stop with the Jesus of the Gospels, but see what Jesus means to others. They see the continuity of the drama of redemption as they study the Bible and Church history. They see the presence of the risen Christ in the lives of men and women who are loyal servants of mankind, some distinguished and some hardly known beyond their own neighborhoods. Whether their conversion has been sudden or a natural step in the process of growth, they discover that God breaks through the secular ways of the world and makes people over.<sup>30</sup>

The crucial point in early adolescence comes from the realization that the boy or girl is beginning to free himself from his parents. This has actually begun previously, but with the onset of puberty it has to be expressed. He ceases to be a child when he takes his place in a community outside the home. There is a danger spot here for the genuinely Christian family and especially for the minister's family, for this rebellion against parents may sometimes

<sup>30</sup> See Basil A. Yeaxlee, *Religion and the Growing Mind*, pp. 135-136.

take the form of rejecting their most cherished notions and allegiances. To reject one's father who is a Christian or a minister means to reject the Church! Children from more casually Christian homes often come to confirmation or Church membership with less tension than do those from specifically Christian homes.

The figure of Jesus Christ, however, stands as a live option for the young adolescent. Christ may become the central figure in the master sentiment. This does not come *through* parental authority but by a *transfer* of authority to the individual. He *must be free* to accept Christ on his own, just as he is free to reject his parents' oppressiveness. It is hard for parents to see this, for they have actually fulfilled the place of God for the pre-school child and have maintained their authority to some degree throughout the primary and junior ages, and now they have to let their boy or girl choose. This delicate balance between freedom and authority is the key to parenthood for the next few years, from twelve until the final break comes when he leaves home.<sup>31</sup>

The drama of redemption provides perspective for this, for the story of God's acts in history is also the story of man's response, and the judgments of the prophets land on those who have misused their freedom. Intermediates have been known to make their pageant for the year a recounting of the five acts of the Biblical drama. They are excited by such plays as *Green Pastures*,<sup>32</sup> which tells the Bible story in such a relevant manner. John Oxenham's *The Hidden Years*,<sup>33</sup> which is full of reverent imagination, fascinates and challenges them. As they come to the end of this period, in the ninth grade, they can appreciate the significance of the motion picture, *Martin Luther*, and Roland Bainton's *The Church of Our Fathers*<sup>34</sup> gives them a picture of the great heroes of the Church.

<sup>31</sup> See Basil A. Yeaxlee, *Religion and the Growing Mind*, pp. 144-146.

<sup>32</sup> New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc.

<sup>33</sup> New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1925.

<sup>34</sup> New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.

## SENIOR HIGH

The senior-high age is able to study a system of theology, and often gets help from a book on the creed, such as Nevin Harner's *I Believe*,<sup>35</sup> but he is more concerned with the companion book, *About Myself*.<sup>35</sup> He understands what Martin Buber means by the "I-Thou" relationship on both the human and the divine level, and he will be heard to say, "I treated her as an 'It' and not as a 'Thou' last night." He knows we cannot treat persons as things or things as ends. He begins to see the connection between his own integration and the loyalty he has for Jesus Christ.

I would like to see a high-school course approach the problem of faith in Christ along the lines of John Knox's *Christ the Lord*. It is divided into three major sections: he was remembered, he was known still, he was interpreted. Knox points out that any true historical understanding of the Bible must be devotional, religious, and theological, and the story of the event of Jesus Christ is that he was remembered, known, and interpreted by a community of believers. When the memories of the early Church, especially in the Synoptic record, are put under the severest tests of critical analysis, they stand out as attesting to the facts about Jesus' life. Many of Jesus' teachings are remembered, chiefly in Matthew and Luke, and Paul has a few sayings of his own.

After his death, Jesus was known still. "The primitive Christian community was not a memorial society with its eyes fastened on a departed master," says Knox; "it was a dynamic community created around a living and present Lord."<sup>36</sup> The resurrection is the fact, however it be understood, on which the whole story turns. Jesus was known as Savior and Lord, and through faith in him the early Christian community found renewal of life. This was "the power of the resurrection."

<sup>35</sup> Philadelphia: Christian Education Press.

<sup>36</sup> John Knox, *Christ the Lord* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), p. 60.

Finally, Jesus was interpreted. It is possible to trace a developing Christology as the New Testament came to terms with the meaning of Christ. God acted in Christ, and the community knew itself as new persons, transformed through faith in the risen Christ, and this needed to be explained. This same Christ comes to us through the memory of him in the New Testament, and he is known still as we come to him in faith, and thus we interpret him anew as we formulate our own beliefs about him.

This approach could be carried over into the responsibilities of high-school students, and against this background they might ask, "Who is *my* Christ?", for they recognize that all men have a guiding light, and they make this light into their own idol, and they serve this cause with devotion. Often the idol may be their own ego, success in worldly terms, popularity with their fellows, or financial gain. They come up against the challenge, "You cannot serve God and money" (Matthew 6:24,G). What does it mean to be a Christian in a modern high school? How should Christian young people behave amid the tensions of home life? What is a Christian vocation? What is my responsibility as a Christian citizen? As a member of the Church, what should I stand for in the realms of social justice and political activity? How does God act in me as I make my decisions? The Gospel becomes relevant to high-school youngsters where they are, and they have the choice of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or of breaking their relationship with him.

While faith in Jesus Christ is the focal point of the Christian faith, one does not discover him through standing in *Act III* (Christ) of the drama of redemption. *Act III* led inevitably to *Act IV* (Church) and the New Testament was written by the Church to express its faith in what God had done through Jesus Christ. Our point in God's time is *Act IV*. We come to Christ through our membership in the Church. It is true that Christ reaches out and brings people in so that they seem to know Christ before they know the Church, but it is the community of



faithful people that keeps the presence of Christ available to those outside the Church. We know Christ through the Scriptures, we meet him in our worship, and his grace is mediated to us through the Holy Spirit in our personal relationships. This results in the joy and peace of believing.

#### THE JOY OF FAITH

A book for little children is entitled *Small Rain*. On one page there is a picture of sixteen youngsters in front of a doorway. They have various musical instruments, a clarinet, a drum, a harmonica, an accordion, a trumpet, cymbals, a xylophone, and their voices. The picture is entitled, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands" (Psalm 100).

This element of *joy* is basic to Christian living. If Oscar Cullmann is right, *Act III* of the drama of redemption is our D-day, and we can rejoice because V-day is at hand.<sup>37</sup> There have been times when we can speak with L. P. Jacks of "the lost radiance of the Christian religion," but it was never lost in Biblical times. Biblical theology abounds in joy. Paul's letter to the Romans has this benediction, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom. 15:13,RSV). "By God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company" (Rom. 15:32,RSV). This "joy in the faith" (Phil. 1:23,RSV), I will be glad to help you develop, that you may be "glad in your faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:23,G,KJ). Luke's version of the Beatitudes tells us that even when we are persecuted and excluded and reviled, we should "rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6:23a,RSV). The story of the Prodigal Son ends with dancing and feasting.

There is nothing of Pollyanna about this radiance and gladness. It comes from a profound understanding of the relation between

<sup>37</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, p. 84.

the cross and the resurrection, between the lostness of those who wander like lost sheep and the redemption of those who are returned to the presence of God, between spiritual death and new life. "Your sorrow will turn into joy," says the Fourth Gospel. "When a woman is in travail, she has sorrow because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:20b-22, RSV).

Our task as Christian educators is to share the joy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with boys and girls, men and women, as they come into the right relationship with Jesus Christ through faith.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CHURCH

THE LIFE, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ led directly to the formation of a community of believers. God acted in and through Christ for the redemption of mankind, and the continuing work of God came as the Holy Spirit led the disciples to become a fellowship. This is *Act IV* (Church) of the drama of redemption, and we find ourselves on the stage as God's action continues today. The same God who created the universe and man, who entered into a covenant relationship with his people, and who came to man in Christ, is at work in the Church. And we who live today find ourselves as members of this community.

God did not cease to act when the resurrection appearances stopped. The Ascension tells us that Christ is the Lord of all mankind. Pentecost stands as the historic witness to the community of the new covenant, as the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to the disciples and to those who were baptized on the first Whitsunday. "God can be depended on, and it was he who called you to this fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Corinthians 1:9,G). The Church is the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (II Corinthians 13:14,M), or "the communion of the Holy Ghost" (KJ) or "participation in the Holy Spirit" (G). This redemptive and sustaining community is the "Body of Christ." "Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it" (I Corinthians 12:27,G). "Christ is the head of the church, which is his body, and which is saved by him" (Ephesians 5:23,G). All this is "to fit his people for the work of service, for the building of the body of Christ,"

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until we all attain unity in faith, and reach mature manhood, and that full measure of development found in Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13,G).

Many words are used to describe "Church" in the New Testament, including "new Israel," "Israel of God," "engrafted branch," "Body of Christ." Among the most common are *Ekklesia* and *Koinonia*. *Ekklesia* refers to a local congregation and to the Church as a whole. Paul sometimes uses it as a building or temple. Chiefly, however, it is the body of Christ. It is those who are called out. *Koinonia* means fellowship, sharing, participation, community. The Church as the bride of Christ and the figure of the vine and the branches points to the organic nature of the relationships within the Church. The Church is a unified body of believers, separated from the world and centered in the living Christ as its head. It is the people of the new covenant, a new Israel. It is doubtful if Jesus used the term, *Ekklesia*, although it appears twice in Matthew. The emphasis in Acts is on *Koinonia*. Various ministries are referred to, and only in the pastoral epistles is there any concern with the qualifications of Church officials.<sup>1</sup>

#### COMMUNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is given to the blessed community, which is a redeeming and sustaining fellowship. It is both fellowship with the living Christ and with one another, but the latter flows from the former. In this fellowship, says Emil Brunner, we find the answer to the dual questions of truth and fellowship. "Here we see *the* truth which is a fellowship and *the* right relationship of men with one another rising from the fact that their life is rooted in the truth. The truth is the love revealed in the Son as the

<sup>1</sup> See Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 147-150. Some relevant passages are I Cor. 12:28, Gal. 6:16, I Cor. 3:9, I. Cor. 3:16ff., Rom. 12:4f., Eph. 4:1-16, Eph. 5:22-33, John 7:7, I Tim. 3:15. The disputed passages in Matthew are 16:18 and 18:17.

image of the Father and the ground of all that is: and this very love is the being of that society which was founded by Jesus Christ and whose life is continuously inspired by him. . . . One dwells in this love through faith, and through faith one participates in the fellowship. But a man cannot acquire this faith except insofar as through love he inheres in the fellowship. Truth and fellowship are here one and the same thing.”<sup>2</sup>

Brunner is not here dealing with the institution of the Church. The Christian community is the extension of the disciples’ fellowship with Jesus, and the early Church was primarily a brotherhood. This brotherhood would extend into the future, and the future contained the expectation of the end of the age. There is no evidence that Jesus founded or foresaw the *institution* that bears his name, but there is every reason to believe that he foresaw the *fellowship* or *community* of the disciples. The expression of this brotherhood was the continuation of the Lord’s Supper, the care for the widows and orphans, and the preaching of the good news until the day that the Lord would return.<sup>3</sup>

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a great concern with polity. Congregational, Presbyterian and Episcopal forms of the ministry are found in embryonic form, but the chief interest was in any ministry that served the brotherhood. A more rigid organization of the Church had developed in the second century, including the bishop who was a true overseer. Some would reason that the variety characterizing the ministry was due to the coming end of the age,<sup>4</sup> while others stress the fact that the whole early ministry was functional, adapting itself to the conditions as they

<sup>2</sup> From *The Misunderstanding of the Church* by Emil Brunner, copyright, 1953, by W. L. Jenkins, the Westminster Press. Used by permission.

<sup>3</sup> See Holt H. Graham, “Community in the Synoptic Gospels,” in *The Joy of Study*, ed. by Sherman E. Johnson (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), pp. 38-40; see also Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), I, pp. 33-62.

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 58-61.



arose.<sup>5</sup> James could become the leader of the Jerusalem Church, displacing Peter, although he was not one of the original twelve.<sup>6</sup> Worship and organization were guided by the Holy Spirit, and the need to meet existing situations led in time to a more rigid concept of the ministry.

This community of the Holy Spirit was the people of the new covenant. It began as a Jewish sect and thought of itself as the new Israel, superseding the old agreement by a new one. These Jewish Christians could not conceive of a Gentile becoming a Christian without also accepting the rite of circumcision. A controversy arose among those who believed that baptism made a non-Jew a Christian and those who believed that Jewish law, ceremonial, and circumcision were necessary intermediate steps. In this Judaizing controversy, there was a break with the cultus of the temple and the Christian faith moved toward universalism. Food laws were no longer binding, and it was permissible to enter a Gentile home.<sup>7</sup>

Paul was the spearhead of this movement, although Mark, Barnabas and Silas were joined with him, and even Peter was finally convinced. But the germ of it lay in the teachings and work of Jesus. Jesus Christ was clearly the head of the new community, which was the true people of the covenant, the living body of the living Christ. From being the remnant of Israel, it became the remnant of the people of the world. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you

<sup>5</sup> Frederick C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), pp. 271-275.

<sup>6</sup> Floyd V. Filson, *Pioneers of the Primitive Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1940), pp. 162-180. See also Alan Richardson, ed., *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 146-152.

<sup>7</sup> See Pierson Parker, *The Gospel Before Mark* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 1-3, 100-103.

are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy" (I Peter 2:9-10,RSV).

*Act IV* (Church) is God's establishment of the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit. The foundation stone is Jesus Christ, a stone which saves those who believe and which causes the disobedient to stumble. Yet those who were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" (Eph. 2:12,RSV) now have found peace. This peace which is preached to those both near and far makes us "no longer strangers and sojourners, but . . . fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-21,RSV).

#### PEACE OF MIND

Within the community there is a new kind of "peace of mind." It is foreign to the satisfactions of the worldly and to the complacency of the Pharisee. It is not the peace that comes from no longer striving, it is not the satisfaction that comes from manipulating God for our own ends, it is not based on thinking the right thoughts. The contrast between the Christian and the worldly view of peace is made clear by William Alexander Percy:

"They cast their nets in Galilee  
Just off the hills of brown;  
Such happy, simple fisherfolk,  
Before the Lord came down.

Contented, peaceful fishermen,  
Before they ever knew  
The peace of God that filled their hearts  
Brimful, and broke them too.

Young John who trimmed the flapping sail  
Homeless, on Patmos, died.  
Peter, who hauled the teeming net,  
Head-down was crucified.

The peace of God, it is no peace,  
But strife closed in the sod.  
Yet, brothers, pray for but one thing—  
The marvelous peace of God.”<sup>8</sup>

This peace exists within the community of the faithful as it provides harmony in the brotherhood, wholeness of those who have personal relationships with each other, and concern for the welfare of all its members. The secret of this spiritual wholeness or health is the gift of love. The elder of Ephesus summarizes it: “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. . . . There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear” (I John 4:7-12, 18a, RSV).

#### A FELLOWSHIP OF PERSONS

The true Church is a fellowship of persons, given to men by the reconciling love of God made manifest in Christ and continuing through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is an *experienced relationship with God and man, and it exists wherever the Holy Spirit rules the hearts of men*. Therefore, it exists to some extent in every institution called a Church, but no particular Church is identical with it. For the empirical Church is always a congregation of sinners rather than a community of love, and thus it seeks security in the world as an institution. As Brunner summarizes it: “the living Word of God is secured—and at the same time replaced

<sup>8</sup> *The Hymnal 1940* (New York: the Church Pension Fund), No. 437. Reprinted with the permission of Le Roy Pratt Percy.

—by theology and dogma; the fellowship is secured—and replaced—by the institution; the faith, which proves its reality by love, is secured—and replaced—by a creed and moral code.”<sup>9</sup>

There is always this tension between the true Church and the institution of the Church. The institution is essential for the continuance of the fellowship, and has always been part of it, but there is always the danger that the institution will replace the fellowship. Our hope lies in the fact that the true Church can be found and experienced within the institutional Church. The beloved community of Christ is a redemptive and sustaining fellowship, in which all the members know themselves to be sinners in need of forgiveness, seekers in need of divine wisdom, strugglers in need of divine power. Therefore, the members are willing to forgive the others in the fellowship, to become channels of light to those in need of guidance, and to be mediators of power to those in need of God’s strength. The living Christ is present in the true Church.

The Church also looks outward from itself. Whenever the fellowship becomes concerned either with its own brotherhood or its own institution at the expense of others, it withers and dies. The Church, when it is true to its genius, is always a missionary fellowship, seeking to bring Christ to those outside the Church and to enlist others in the fellowship. This is not a geographical but a spiritual problem, for the missionary work of the Church goes on at all places and at all times. The Church is also concerned with the nature of its surrounding world, which means that the Gospel is relevant to all groups, large and small. The emphasis on the social Gospel in the first part of the twentieth century, as the Church became more concerned with conditions of labor, political programs, and international relations, is an expression of the outgoing character of the Christian faith. Whatever involves people and their relationships with each other and with God comes under the critical scrutiny of the Church.

<sup>9</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, p. 53.

This is evident in the New Testament record. Not only was there the care of widows and orphans, but there was direction for Christian community as it deals with the government. The early Christian communism (Acts 4:32-5:11), the willingness to suffer martyrdom, the carrying of the Gospel to the heathen, and the healing of the sick were expressions of the Gospel in daily life.

#### BAPTISM

The means of entering the Church was baptism. This was the mark of repentance and new life, and it was followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. It had grown from John's baptism and the Jewish form of baptism into a new rite. As with John, it meant a washing away of sin and it was a sacrament of initiation. But Paul's interpretation went deeper and it became a sacrament of regeneration: the baptized person is a new creature, having been reborn into the community of faithful people; he is made new through Christ. The result was a higher level of ethical living and a life of decision in obedience to Christ.

There is no clear evidence whether infants were baptized, the argument often turning on the statement that "the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy" (I Cor. 7:14, RSV). All we know is that households were baptized, but we do not know if infants were included.

Baptism is a symbol of a new relationship with God and our fellows, by which the infant, child, or adult is received as "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven." He is "grafted onto the Body of Christ," and it is God's intention that he grow in grace. This new relationship is to be strengthened within the fellowship of believers. The Church is a "baptizing fellowship" through which God works and continues to work, and this points to the educational and nurturing responsibility of the congregation and the family. The grace offered in



baptism is mediated through Christian witness, which with infants means the parents and godparents as they are helped by the congregation.<sup>10</sup>

#### THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper, like baptism, can be traced back to an incident in the life of Jesus. There are many theories as to the sacramental meals the disciples shared with Jesus during his ministry, and these theories affect the interpretation of the Last Supper. The evidence, furthermore, is not clear that Jesus intended to institute a sacrament, although the tradition of the Church strongly supports this thesis. It was a means of symbolizing the new covenant relationship. By the time the accounts of the Last Supper were in writing, the Church already had formed the custom of "the breaking of bread," but the expectation of the coming kingdom overshadowed any idea of permanence. So the Church has sung,

"Feast after feast thus comes and passes by,  
Yet, passing, points to the glad feast above,  
Giving us foretaste of the festal joy,  
The Lord's eternal feast of bliss and joy."<sup>11</sup>

From these simple beginnings came the Holy Communion. It is communion with the living Christ who is the host at the Supper. It is a rite of fellowship among those who have a personal relationship with Christ. Its full meaning does not become clear in the New Testament, for the Church as *Act IV* in the drama of redemption continues to reveal the nature of God and the meaning of life. The Holy Communion stands as a reminder that the Word

<sup>10</sup> See Reuel L. Howe, *Man's Need and God's Action* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), pp. 49-61; E. W. Southcott, *Receive This Child* (London: A. A. Mowbray, 1951); Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, new edit., 1948), pp. 102-164.

<sup>11</sup> Horatius Bonar, *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 206, stanza 3.

did not cease to communicate with men at the Ascension and the Holy Spirit did not die at Pentecost.<sup>12</sup>

There is also here a profound association between food and love. Reuel L. Howe calls the Holy Communion "the sacrament of the common food and the uncommon love."<sup>13</sup> It is a participation in the healing of relationships, the recognition of the equality of all men in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the at-one-ness with Christ which makes possible our reconciliation with men. "The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby. . . . The benefits . . . are the strengthening and refreshing of our souls."<sup>14</sup>

#### PREACHING

The examples of preaching in the book of Acts provide us with guidance for today. These sermons trace the history of God's mighty acts, going from the Old Testament to the event of Christ.<sup>15</sup> "Those who were scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4,RSV) as missionaries, but we are told also that "every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42,RSV).

James D. Smart suggests that a false distinction between teaching and preaching leads to moralism in teaching and empty proclamation in preaching. While there is a difference in emphasis, good preaching always involves teaching and good teaching always includes confrontation with the Gospel.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Frederick C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), pp. 282-293.

<sup>13</sup> Reuel L. Howe, *Man's Need and God's Action*, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 292-293.

<sup>15</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1953), p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> See his *Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 13-23.

Preaching always points beyond itself to the Word of God. The Church's worship, preaching, reading from the Bible, and affirmation of faith point to God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ as this revelation becomes meaningful in the lives of the hearers. This Word is made known to us by the Holy Spirit as he directs our minds and spirits.

Preaching relates theology to life. It brings the Gospel to bear on all the practical matters of everyday living. It interprets man's speculations about the meaning of life and the nature of the universe. It provides guidance for both belief and behavior. In the midst of terror, turmoil, and despair, preaching tells the hearer how God will help him. It is not the job of the preacher to compound the despair but to recall God's saving acts in history so that his congregation will face the present and the future with the dynamic hope of Christian faith.<sup>17</sup>

Preaching takes place in the Church and within the context of worship. Because the people know that they are living in *Act IV* of the drama of redemption, the preacher picks them up at this point, recalling all that has been done for them in the first three acts, and helping them to live in *Act IV* and to be ready for *Act V* (Consummation).

Preaching is sacramental in its nature because it is a means whereby the redemptive love of God is given and received. True preaching is a channel of grace as God acts through the preacher to speak to the congregation. Whether this preaching be part of Holy Communion or some other order of worship, and whether it be for children, or adults, or both, God can make it a means of grace.

#### UNITY AND DIVERSITY

The unity of the Church as portrayed in the New Testament was the unity of a shared life and faith. There was recognition of

<sup>17</sup> See W. Russell Bowie, "Relating Theology to Life," in *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp. 137-162.

the presence of the Holy Spirit within the fellowship of believers, and there was a memory of the event by which Jesus Christ had been made manifest. A new community had come into existence, and this community was infused with the Spirit of God and founded on its faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus of Nazareth as a man made little impact on the secular history of Israel, Greece, or Rome, but through the Church he changed the course of history. Only the Church knew the significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as Lord.

This common faith was expressed from the beginning in a diversity of ways. There are many levels of interpretation in the New Testament, and we find this expressed in its theology, polity, and worship. This diversity caused hard feelings between Paul and Peter, between the Church in Jerusalem and the Church among the Gentiles, and between others who fought battles on various lines.<sup>18</sup>

Most of us do not take this diversity seriously enough when we think of the united Christendom that is coming. As John Knox writes, "The united church of tomorrow cannot be modeled after the divided church of the first century."<sup>19</sup> The principle of unity is there, found in the centrality of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Every Church has a structure, and this is expressed in its organization, polity, and worship. In the early Church, these varieties in its structure developed to meet the needs of the times. In order to embody the fellowship in a visible and enduring institution, these steps were necessary. The emerging Catholicism, as Knox reminds us, "was the culmination of a gradual effort to

<sup>18</sup> See Ernest W. Parsons, *The Religion of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1939); Frederick C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), pp. 29-42; John Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), pp. 20-41; Ernest F. Scott, *The Varieties of New Testament Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943).

<sup>19</sup> John Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church*, p. 16.

realize and express in appropriate forms of polity and cult the unity that belongs to the very nature of the church.”<sup>20</sup>

The educational work of the Church from the beginning was both an expression of fellowship and an organization for a task. Throughout the New Testament there are references to teachers. While they did not always have the status of the more priestly and evangelical offices, they instructed all converts along the traditional lines of their Jewish predecessors. There is a strong element of religious instruction in Hebrews, I Peter, and James, and in a more informal way in Paul’s letters. Frederick C. Grant suggests that the Gospel according to Matthew is a text in religious education. It was a feature of Church life from the beginning.<sup>21</sup>

#### THE HOLY SPIRIT

While the Holy Spirit is the gift to the Church, and in this sense the Church is the Spirit-bearing body, he is not restricted to the Church. He is the giver of all life. Biblical theology tends to stress the activity of the Spirit in the community of the faithful, and narrower views made the Spirit almost the private property of a dispensing institution, but the broader view sees the Spirit working throughout history and throughout the cosmos. The new fact at Pentecost was not the formation of the Spirit, for he was the same Spirit who had spoken through the prophets. The new fact was the new relationship of the disciples to each other and to the risen and living Christ through the manifestation to them of the Holy Spirit.

We understand the working of the Holy Spirit best by looking at the history of the early Church. The overwhelming, invigorating, and unifying power of God was revealed in the life of the followers of “the way.” The Holy Spirit worked through the community. The Spirit dwelt in the Body of Christ as the *esprit de corps*. The Church became the “Spirit-dwelling body.” The authority of the

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>21</sup> See his *An Introduction to New Testament Thought*, pp. 298-299.



group was formulated as follows: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (Acts 15:28,KJ).

The institution of the Church becomes a redeeming and sustaining community by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is "the grace of God in action." We find him as we read or listen to the Scriptures, as we partake of the sacraments, as we hear the Word being preached. The acts of worship cease to be wooden and routine when the Holy Spirit lifts them up.

The Holy Spirit is the strengthener, providing us with power to do what otherwise we could not do. He works through our seeking for justice and righteousness among men and nations; he works through our ethical decisions; he impels us toward sacrificial living.

As the giver of life, the Holy Spirit is not restricted to the Church. As the source of truth, he is at work in the cosmos. A prayer by Charles Henry Brent has this petition: "Help us to place the truth above our conception of it, and joyfully to recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit wherever he may choose to dwell among men."<sup>22</sup> James A. Pike and W. Norman Pittenger summarized it as follows: "The scientist seeking truth, the artist expressing beauty, the statesman striving for justice, the soldier giving his life for his comrade, the mother sacrificing for her children, the businessman working honestly for a living, the carpenter at his workbench, the manual laborer digging a ditch—in every department of human life where men seek to live as men, conformed to the truth as they see it, the good as they know it, the right as they believe it—at every point of experience, there is the working of the Holy Spirit."<sup>23</sup>

The Holy Spirit transforms us, calls us into the relationship of faith in Christ whereby we are justified, gives us power to obey the

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in *Prayers New and Old* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1937), p. 57.

<sup>23</sup> James A. Pike and W. Norman Pittenger, *The Faith of the Church* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1951), p. 121; see pp. 109-125.

will of the heavenly Father, provides the relationship that leads to the integration of our personalities, and draws us into true community with other persons. When we participate in the Spirit, we have fellowship with one another, we share both our material possessions and the radiance of our faith, and we forgive each other as the redemptive love of God comes alive in us.<sup>24</sup>

The new covenant with the Lord of history, beginning in *Act III* (Christ) of the drama of redemption, finds its community in *Act IV* (Church). We are the people of the new covenant, the inheritors of the kingdom of God. Because *Act IV* takes us beyond the story the Bible tells and brings us down to the present day, our membership in a historical community is of supreme importance. We are the successors of the apostolic community, and different communions have their own ideas of what kinds of apostolic succession they have. We understand our place in history in terms of the story of the Christian Church as God has acted in history. We need to be members of the Church through our identification of ourselves with its traditions, through the direction we receive as individuals from the Holy Spirit, and through the influence of the community upon us.

#### THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

When we face the problems of Christian education, we need to know where we stand in history. This age is *Act IV* of the drama of redemption, the age of the Church and the Holy Spirit. We measure history in terms of B.C. and A.D. and we know that we live in the period after the mid-point of history in the year of our Lord. *Act IV* centers in the Church and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We are members of the Church through our baptism. We participate in the shared life of a community of redemptive and

<sup>24</sup> See J. Robert Nelson, *The Realm of Redemption* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1951), p. 66; also pp. 37-66. See also Theodore O. Wedel, *The Coming Great Church* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1945), pp. 56-66.

sustaining power in which our basic needs are met. Whether we be children or adults, the life of the Church can meet our ultimate requirement for love and acceptance by showing us the forgiving love of God in Christ. This may not always be evident in either the behavior or the worship of a particular congregation, but the fact of being a fellowship of the Holy Spirit (to whatever degree) releases God's power to those who are really seeking the Lord where he may be found.

The structure of law and discipline for our lives is found in the teaching of the Church as it reiterates the commandments of the Law and the prophets. The requirements for justice and social righteousness, the prophetic hope of God's act in sending a Messiah to save us from our sins, and the simple summary that we must "do justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8,G), are found in the Word of God as it has been entrusted to the Church.

The freedom and direction of our growth depends on our response in faith within the community to the Holy Spirit, for God's grace works through the Holy Spirit to enable us to "walk worthy of the vocation to which we are called" (Eph. 4:1,KJ). The community is the nurturing agent as individuals find the truth that makes them free. The Church stands for freedom in community. It provides that quality of life which is the key to a sound educational program. The combination of its theology and its methods of teaching make education possible.

Our need to believe in and to bow before God is guaranteed by the Church, for outside the redemptive and sustaining fellowship of Jesus Christ we may well worship the demonic forces of the State, the superstitious deities of the neurotic or primitive, or the idols of modern society. Even from within the Church, there is always the danger that the anti-Christ will be worshiped. We need every help in our worship of God who loves us so much that he sent Jesus Christ to be the expiation of our sins, so that we might through faith in him not perish but have everlasting life.

Only within such a community can Christian education take place.<sup>25</sup>

Education is always the reflection of a social process in which the learner participates. If John Dewey has taught us anything, it is that the learner faces real problems within the social group and learns by solving these problems. This is true of education in the schoolroom, as a member of a baseball team, or as a member of a congregation at worship. The specifically Christian element in community life is its redemptive and sustaining power as the grace of God is channeled through the group. Growth in religion takes place as the learner is enabled to respond in faith to the free gift of God's grace.

This places an almost impossible demand on the modern parish. Because the local parish is a congregation of sinners in need of repentance, the quality of life that is communicated to the learner may be the opposite of what is desired. He does not feel at ease with his fellow-worshippers, his problems are not even mentioned and certainly they are not solved, and he comes to the conclusion that what he is being taught is irrelevant. Christians have returned to the New Testament to recapture the essence of the Gospel, and the evidence of the effectiveness of the New Testament faith is that it has transformed the Church. But many Christians have turned to the New Testament to support their own convictions, to set up a form of polity, or to answer questions that no one is asking. The New Testament teaches us about *Act IV* (Church) of the drama of redemption only as it gives us perspective on the first three acts and makes the whole process relevant to the predicament of modern man.

The growing child is a member of many communities, and often they make diametrically opposed demands on his loyalties. He faces serious conflicts as he finds contradictions in the value-judgments of his family, his school, his gang, his personal prefer-

<sup>25</sup> See *You Need the Church* (Cincinnati: Forward Movement, 1953), p. 8.

ences, and his Church. The Biblical drama of redemption becomes relevant at this point, for it tells how God has dealt with conflicting loyalties and how God has provided resources for the development of a dominant loyalty leading to Christian maturity and wholeness of personality in any culture. "We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching and the jockeying of men who are expert in the crafty presentation of lies. But we are meant to hold firmly to the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ, the Head" (Eph. 4:14-15,P).

#### EDUCATION FOR BAPTISM

The child's first relationship with the Church is normally his baptism or dedication. With baptism he becomes a member of the community, he is a new person who shares in the new covenant, and he is reborn into the family of God. With dedication, he comes under the care of the community, although his membership depends on "believer's baptism." In either case, the congregation accepts an educational responsibility, for baptism or dedication is not some kind of magic, and it depends for its effectiveness on the ministry of the members of the congregation. Infant baptism has been undergirded throughout the centuries by the ministry of godparents whose chief religious responsibility to the child has been to make sure he is reared as a Christian and makes his own commitment at the age of discretion.

We are not sure what God does directly in baptism, but we do know what God intends. The water and the words are the outward sign that the child is made new as an organic member of the body of which Christ is the head. The commitment is made for the child by the sponsors or parents, and he is therefore born a Christian just as he has been born the citizen of a nation and the member of a family.

While this is obviously what the Church has intended throughout the ages, baptism has often been considered simply a magical



rite to keep the child out of Purgatory if it dies. Parents have their child "done" just as they have him vaccinated, but baptism is not automatic in its effects. God is acting through the parents, godparents, and congregation; or, in many cases, God is being thwarted by the failure of these people to accept their responsibility.

An educational program is essential if baptism is to be effective. Some congregations have worked out an educational program "from womb to tomb." At the proper time, they begin education for Christian marriage and this is followed by specific pre-marital instruction. The Church's ministry is taken to expectant parents, so that they understand the significance of the approaching event. Prior to the baptism, a conference with parents and godparents is held to acquaint them with the theology and responsibility of baptism. They begin to see the significance of the language of relationships in the home and to understand their place in the religious development of the child. As the parents answer the vital needs of the tiny child, he is prepared for his later understanding of the existence and nature of God and of the Church as a redemptive and sustaining community. For the time being, home is Church and the parents are God, psychologically, for there is meaning in life for him *now*. This is the only possible medium for the child's Christian nurture, and the only question is what kind of religion is being experienced.<sup>26</sup>

For the child to be accepted into the congregation when there is no congregation present is patently absurd. There are reasons for private baptism, but the normal procedure is for baptism to take place as part of public worship. This not only supplies for the parents and godparents an added sense of the seriousness of their commitment, but it offers the members of the congregation an opportunity to assert their own responsibility. It is good for those who have forgotten it to discover that a baby may cry to

<sup>26</sup> See Basil A. Yeaxlee, *Religion and the Growing Mind* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1952), pp. 43-44.

the glory of God. We have faith that God accepts this child *as he is*—crying or smiling, dry or wet, gurgling or slobbering; and the congregation also accepts him.

#### THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The congregation's educational program needs to follow the tiny child. Most cradle-roll programs are hopelessly unrealistic, and often what is suggested has no relevance to the religious development of the child. When more realistic programs are suggested, they are so close to the help offered by psychologists and psychiatrists that parents sometimes have difficulty seeing the religious significance of this assistance. Yet it is by providing for the basic needs of the child in the attitude of love that there is what Dora Chaplin calls "a climate in which grace flourishes."

Good advice is not enough. Only as the home is inhabited by the Holy Spirit do the parents achieve the power to maintain the redemptive and sustaining relationships which are the Gospel in action. The home and Church have a mutual responsibility, with the Church undergirding the priesthood of parenthood. The Church ministers to the family-as-a-unit as well as to the individuals in the family, so that the needs of the home are met by the Gospel.

The pattern of life of many young couples makes this ministry difficult. The pressures of the home take young parents out of the mainstream of the Church's life after the baptism of the child and then they come back when the child is entered in Church school; but then there are more children to keep one parent or another in the home until the last one is old enough to enter the nursery class or kindergarten. By that time, any ministry to parents to help them in the formative years is too late. This is why the Church's approach to the family-as-a-unit is essential. If the whole family, including those in baby carriages, can come to Church together, with common family worship followed by baby-sitting for the tiny tots and classes for everyone

else, fewer couples will stay away from Church during this period. If the program is made relevant in terms of the real needs of the individuals, the members of the family will stay together in the Church until they meet the problems of adolescence, at which point various other approaches may be needed.

Home and Church should cooperate during the entire process of Christian education. Until the rise of the Sunday school, the home took the primary responsibility. When Horace Bushnell wrote his *Christian Nurture* in 1847, he assumed that the nurturing process would center in the home. The home should take seriously the commandment: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut. 6:4-9,RSV).

The writer does not expect that little children will understand all this ritual and talking. It will be part of the routine of his upbringing. The questions and explanations will come later, "When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the LORD our God has commanded you?' then shall you say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.' Because of all that God has done, he has commanded us to keep his statutes" (Deut. 6:20-21, see 22-25,RSV).

#### NURSERY

With the nursery child, the "much speaking" is unimportant. The demand is for adequate communication of the truths of God

by the parents to the children through the only avenues that are open. While words can be used to explain these relationships at an early age and in due time the child should learn the vocabulary of the Church, these truths are best communicated through relationships. No one is at ease in a foreign country until he has mastered the language and no one is fully a member of the Church until he knows the Church's vocabulary, but the common elements of Christian experience must underlie the words. "In due time" the right questions will be asked.

The nursery child knows that the Church is a building. Sometimes all he knows is the educational building, and often he knows only the way down the hall or stairs to his room. This room is the center of his Church life, and he goes there alone once he is able to leave his parents. This is good—provided it is not his whole experience of the Church. He should have some opportunity to worship in the Church with other children and preferably with his parents. He should associate the Church with "family night" programs, and he should feel the impact of the great festivals of the Church year. If the Church is to be a redemptive community for the nursery child, he should intuit something of the impact of Christmas and Easter as Christian festivals. He may not know in words what birth or death or resurrection mean, but he can share in the atmosphere of faith and worship. This does not mean that he should be forced into the pattern of *adult* worship, although there are some children of this age who seem to be able to adapt to adult ways without revolt. The services should meet his needs where he is.

The nursery child should know his minister. There are various ways in which this is accomplished. In family worship, the chief pastor normally conducts the service or tells the story. During class period, the minister may visit the nursery class or department either just to say "hello" or to take part in the program as arranged with the teacher. The informality of the nursery program makes such interruptions possible without upsetting the activities of the

class. He may stand in a corner and a few of the children will visit briefly with him.

In such ways as these, the nursery child feels that he is an accepted member of the larger Christian community. His chief security, however, is found in the nursery class, and it is here that he discovers through personal relations with the teachers and other children that he is loved and accepted, that there is a dependable routine, that he is free to explore and to express himself, and that there is an element of mystery in the world of his own experience.

#### KINDERGARTEN

What has been said of the nursery child applies in much the same way to those four and five years old. The kindergartner is making adjustments to a larger world and is learning something of the nature of cooperation. He likes to take a brief part in the family worship service or at least in events involving the entire Church school. He is beginning to work with others and needs status as well as security. He develops a possessive feeling about "*my Church*." The sense of wonder is aroused by the beautiful in life, and he finds reality through imagination and fantasy. He is beginning to discover the difference between good and evil, and he accepts authority and believes everything adults tell him. The moral attitude of the congregation, especially as illustrated in the teacher, is crucial for this period of development. The ideas he develops now become part of his personality and go far to determine his idea of God and the Church.

#### PRIMARY

Primary children become realists. They still like fantasy and hero stories, but they want them labeled as such. They now want facts. By the time they are eight, an exploration of the Church buildings is a fascinating project. They are full of questions about the architecture, the symbols, the windows, and all



the things they can see. They are much more social, and do not like to be left out of activities of the community. In one congregation, it is the custom to have Holy Communion at stated times in the family worship service. The nursery, kindergarten, and primary children were dismissed after the first part of the service, and the rest of the Church school stayed for the remainder of the service. A special feature of this Communion was that everyone went to the altar rail, and unconfirmed children were asked to place their hands behind them as they knelt. The minister placed his hand on the children's head in blessing as he gave Communion to the others. When the primary children heard about this, they asked to be included, so that the family Communion service is for all children and adults, except for those below first grade who are present for only about ten minutes. The entire service lasts from forty to forty-five minutes, from nine-fifteen to ten, leaving forty minutes for the regular class session for children and parents. Such relationships experienced in the fellowship of the Church assist children in overcoming their insecurity and in making new adjustments; and the love of God is made real to them through the life of the congregation.

Ways in which primary children are included in the life of the Church may be discovered when we are alert to their needs. When a baptism is going to take place or has taken place, steps may be taken to help primary children understand what is happening. This is particularly important if one of their classmates is being baptized and they are attending the service. The fellowship of activities of the congregation often includes the family-as-a-unit. The "family night" dinner and entertainment or educational program is effective, particularly if care is taken to meet the needs of all individuals who are present.

During this primary period, a transference is taking place. The security of home and the love of parents is being replaced by relationships with other children, groups at school and on the playground, and adults who have various degrees of authority.

They have more responsibility placed on them for making decisions and for their actions. This is not just a change of social orientation, and this diversification of pressures may prove devastating unless some unifying element is at work. The group, the teacher, fantasy projections, and the home cannot provide these resources. The transference must be to something as real as the parents and must provide a foundation for future growth. The Church seeks to be the kind of community which makes the process of integration and the development toward spiritual maturity possible; it seeks to be the channel of God's grace, so that the child will come to the experience of an "I-Thou" relationship with God that is the center of his life. What has begun in the home continues in the relationships of the Church. As the child discovers that his parents are neither omniscient nor omnipotent, at about the sixth or seventh year he turns to outside sources of knowledge and power. His metaphysical curiosity leads him to ask questions about the nature of the universe and of God's place in the world and in his life. This is not just intellectual curiosity, however, but is part of the crisis of growing up. He needs to find someone as real as his parents who will provide status and security, and the crucial element in making this transfer is the assurance that a real God loves him as he is.<sup>27</sup>

#### JUNIOR

This need is accentuated for the junior, for while the primary child still may retreat into the security of his parents' love and find satisfaction, the junior is much more on his own. The complexities of community life make contradictory demands on him, so that his loyalties face in opposite directions. In some cases, there is consistency between the school, home, clubs, and Church, and then the tensions are not too difficult for him to handle. He is also developing his own inner consistency of response to new

<sup>27</sup> See Basil A. Yeaxlee, *Religion and the Growing Mind*, pp. 100-101, 110-111.

situations, and this growing integrity of character gives him direction in the face of conflicting demands. If he is exposed to impossible ideals attractively presented in pious biographies, he may develop a strong sense of guilt because he cannot be like these idols in ivory towers. Whether it be Washington or Lincoln or Lee or Edison or Paul or Jesus, the characters *as portrayed* suffer none of the agonies of moral and spiritual conflict. They may suffer and die physically, but the inner turmoil is not pictured in terms the junior can understand. Personal relationship, with its sensitivity to the real needs and capacities of the child, may be lost in the reading of books or in the giving of moral axioms.

Ideally, the Church should be able to meet the junior at this point of conflicting loyalties. As a fellowship in which he makes decisions, he learns that his membership depends on his faith-in-action and not on impossible moral standards. The moral law stands against what he is, but God loves him even when he fails to achieve the goal. Because he is accepted as he is, he is empowered to be better than he has been.

The moral teaching of the Church helps the junior if it is not reduced to moralism. He is not interested in a Puritanical moral code, but he has real insights into the nature of justice, especially as it concerns him. "It isn't fair!" is his favorite comment on events when they go against his wishes. The Ten Commandments make sense, and the Church's concern for justice in the community interests him. Because he is becoming involved in many groups within the community, he wants to see justice in community relations.

He is ready, as we have said, to make a commitment or be confirmed at the end of this time or within a year or two. The status of full Church membership gives him an additional sense of security, and participation in the Lord's Supper provides a new relationship with the congregation and with Jesus Christ. He is ready to sing:

“Rise up, O men of God!  
The Church for you doth wait:  
Her strength unequal to her task;  
Rise up, and make her great!”<sup>28</sup>

#### JUNIOR HIGH

The intermediate or junior-high, having been confirmed or made his commitment either at the end of the sixth grade or sometime during the seventh or eighth grade in most Churches, considers himself a full member of the Church. He is in the midst of a period of rebellion, however, and may withdraw from the Church's life at the end of this period. Parental pressure drops after confirmation, and the rebellion of the junior-high boy or girl wears the parents down until the senior-high no longer attends. One theory is that the loss of the boy or girl actually comes during the junior-high stage, but that it becomes overt when he is old enough to make his rebellion effective. The right approach during the junior-high stage may capture the loyalty of the group, and this may carry over to senior-high age. When the junior-high knows himself to be genuinely needed and when what is offered is relevant to his wants as well as to his needs, he will stay with the Church.

The intermediate is capable of a genuinely historical approach to the Bible and to the story of the Church. He finds the adventures of the Acts of the Apostles full of absorbing details and he comes to a fuller understanding of the New Testament Church. Probably the best approach to Church history comes in the ninth grade, when he can handle such a book as Roland Bainton's *The Church of Our Fathers*.<sup>29</sup> Before this, the problem of living creatively in his own world as a Christian is significant for the seventh grader and the background for Church history in terms

<sup>28</sup> William Pierson Merrill, *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 535, stanza 3. Used with the permission of *The Presbyterian Outlook*.

<sup>29</sup> New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.

of the Biblical drama might be the factual resource for the eighth grade. This is the time to be specific about the documentary theory of the Pentateuch, the authorship and origin of the Gospels and Epistles, and the relevance of the Bible writings to the life situations that brought them on. They can see themselves as living in *Act IV* of the drama of redemption. They prefer to be objective at this point, for self-analysis challenges their security. By identifying themselves, in their own private experience, with the real persons of history, they may make an overt attack on their problems or they may prefer to do this privately.

#### TRANSITION TO SENIOR HIGH

The junior-high and senior-high young people have the same basic needs, but their terms of reference are different. The crucial point is the capacity of the congregation to love and accept them *as they are*. The older people have forgotten how they thought and felt as adolescents, and they tend either to belittle the problems of this period or to be impatient with adolescent modes of behavior. The relationship of law and freedom is changing for the adolescent. He is struggling with it on one level at the age of thirteen and on an entirely new level when he is sixteen. At thirteen he may be seeking the privilege of choosing his own friends and at sixteen he may be facing the problem of using the family automobile. He wants to express these varying degrees of freedom in the Church. He wants his worship to be meaningful on *his* terms, which is not difficult to accomplish if the older people care enough. He is straining to establish his own autonomy in relation to the adult world and to the opposite sex, and he needs to discover that his real freedom lies in commitment of his total personality to Almighty God.

#### SENIOR HIGH

The high-school student needs to belong to a group. The recent developments in group procedures help us here. In the best



high-school organizations in the Church, group procedures are used almost exclusively. The major goal at the beginning of the year is to *become a group* in which all of the members are accepted and the leaders are recognized as having a rightful place. In such a situation, high-school students may begin to see their real problems, to discover that the Christian religion can help analyze their problems, to find out that they cannot solve their problems by means of human resources alone, and finally to come to the conclusion that there is a Christian answer. They discover that the Christian answer frequently is not the one they prefer, and then comes the temptation to disobey the will of God in favor of their own egos. They seek easier solutions and tend to be satisfied with adjustment to their equals, with acceptance of the mores of the culture, with the idea that God will help them get what they want if they use the right techniques and thoughts.

The local parish, when it is a redemptive and sustaining community, lets them play with all of these ideas. It does not force the Gospel on them, although they see that their answers along these lines are other than what the Gospel requires or promises. Because they are free to express their doubts and their skepticism and to give whatever answers seem best to them at the time, the group may be guided into profounder problems and answers. They may come to the place where they are ready to listen, and at this point the resource person can say what needs to be said with some hope of being understood.

The high-school group itself is not often a redemptive and sustaining fellowship. In order to exist at all, it needs to build on the secular peer groups already available. It may consist of a number of mutually exclusive cliques, of groups from several public and private schools, of members from different neighborhoods, and of boys and girls of several degrees of social and religious maturity. In downtown parishes, there is often not even this much cohesion, while some suburban parishes often draw their entire youth membership from one high school. If all the

members have grown up in the local congregation, these barriers are more easily surmounted, but in this day of great mobility newcomers are constantly seeking to be included. The primary objective of the youth class or fellowship is to make these individuals into a community in which each member has a concern for the welfare of all the others.

One gathering of high-school students dealt with this problem: Esmeralda was a member of a youth group. She was not the popular type and was never whistled at. She came by herself and joined in the activities. When the time came to go to chapel, she went in by herself. She was tolerated by the other members, but no one did anything about her. She was allowed to be on the dish-washing crew and occasionally was appointed to a committee. One evening, the group was working out plans for a play. The casting was going on and various members spoke up for the parts they wanted and the president was making the final decisions. Near the end, someone asked, "What about Esmeralda?" To which there came a quick reply: "O, she doesn't count. Let her take tickets." At this point, Esmeralda could stand it no longer. She stood up, and with tears in her eyes, she said: "So I don't count, huh? You and all your talk about Christ. He may have died for you, but he didn't die for me." And she ran out of the room.

The story was cut at that point, and the young people gathered into several small discussion groups and worked on Esmeralda's problem for an hour and a half. Their reports were given to a leader during the lunch hour, and the workshops continued for another hour on specific problems of youth work. Then all came together for a closing worship service and a report on what happened to Esmeralda. Some reported that since Esmeralda was "a drip" they were better off without her. Another answer was that the organization of the group should be altered to make sure Esmeralda had a job. But a few showed more insight. They knew that Esmeralda had to be brought into the community in terms of Christian relationships. The answer had to come now in terms of

action by an individual and by the group. Only through reconciliation could the wound be healed in Esmeralda and in the fellowship.

The youth group or class is a Church in miniature, a redemptive cell within the larger fellowship. The major problems of youth are those of personal relationships. These are the subject matter of their discussions, and when they are free to talk about their real problems they are at ease in the congregation. Because their problems are real and they need answers in order to live meaningfully, the Gospel will be heard when it is relevant.

#### WORSHIP

Children of all ages and adults are brought together in the fellowship of the Church through worship. This urgency to worship arises from the nature of Christian faith. The Church is an organic body in which the members express their relationship with each other and with God through corporate worship. During the early persecutions, Christians could have maintained their private devotions without danger, but they were satisfied with nothing less than corporate worship. Because they were members of Christ's body, to stay away from worship was to dismember their Lord, and this they would not do.<sup>30</sup>

The worship of the early Church provided a good deal of variety, but chiefly it consisted of prayer, preaching and the Lord's Supper. Usually this was one service, but there is mention of a service of praise, after which the congregation went away, returning later for the Eucharist. The basis is found here for the two common services of Christendom, although the centrality of the Lord's Supper is abundantly clear.<sup>31</sup>

If we are to learn the way of Christian living, we need to be

<sup>30</sup> See Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Worship of the Church* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1952), p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> See John Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church*, pp. 23-28, and Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, pp. 26-32.

captured by the Holy Spirit through worship. This is no elective added to the curriculum, but is central to the procedures of Christian education based on Biblical theology. Worship is man's corporate response as a creature in the presence of his creator and redeemer. It includes praise and adoration, confession and the restoration of the believer to fellowship with God, the discovery of God's will in Scripture and sermon, affirmation of faith, prayers for one's self and for others, thanksgiving, and the assurance of God's blessing. This may be expressed in services of the Word and in the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. It may be in the simplest terms of non-liturgical practice or in more elaborate formal liturgies.

The educational task is to bring out these responses to God in the learners of all ages. The tendency has been to destroy the sense of corporateness in order to grade the worship to the need of the various age groups, and this has been a reaction to the previous practice of bringing all members of the congregation to a service adapted to the needs of adults only.

One answer to this paradox is to develop a service modified to the needs of all the members of the family as a unit without destroying the basic elements in the full worshiping tradition of the Church. This family service fulfills the requirements of an adequate psychology of worship, is modeled after the main service of the day, and contains all the variations of Christian worship.

The normal practice is to have the family service at 9 A.M. or 9:15 A.M. each Sunday. It lasts from twenty-five to thirty-five minutes, and then the parents go to their class at the same time as the children. Thus the whole family is ministered to as a unit, with the parents acting in their vocation as parents. The session is over by 10:45 A.M., and those who wish remain for the main service of the day.

The important thing is to make worship an organic part of the educational process. The experience of participating in the corporate body of worshipers, of knowing the healing power of



God's grace, of affirming the faith of the congregation and of the Church through the ages, and of responding in faith to the gift of God's power and love is central not only to our well-being as Christian believers but also to the learning process. What happens in class reflects inevitably the attitudes and appreciations found in worship. The interpretation of the worshipping life of the congregation brings to life the drama of redemption and makes clear the significance of our living in the age of the Church and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the whole family participates. Infants and pre-school children may be present for only a few minutes, but their presence symbolizes the Christian meaning of family life and the atmosphere and ritual may come to have meaning for them.<sup>32</sup>

#### THE PROBLEM

The problem of the Church is the same for all ages. The purpose of Christian education is to make it possible for all people to be members of the redemptive community *now*. They live in Act IV (Church) of the drama of redemption, and they are frustrated when the local congregation is not a redemptive and sustaining community. Many congregations fall short of this goal in their ministries to both children and adults, and it is realistic to admit that every parish is a congregation of sinners. But the Christian hope is that sinners are transformed. Simply to admit one's sinfulness and to accept that condition as permanent is not the Christian answer. If salvation is real, it is a change of the total person that launches a process of genuine development in a

<sup>32</sup> See my *Education for Christian Living* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956), pp. 243-262, for a fuller treatment of family and departmental worship, practical methods, and its application to Christian education. See also my *A Guide for Church School Teachers*, rev. ed. (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1947), pp. 59-70. Henry Sloane Coffin, in *The Public Worship of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 156-179, has an excellent chapter on "Children and Worship."



new direction. Maturity of Christian faith is a genuine possibility. As Albert Outler says, "God *intends* to make *saints* of men."<sup>33</sup> Lesbia Scott's hymn, "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God," says it so everyone can understand:

"They lived not only in ages past,  
There are hundreds of thousands still.  
The world is bright with the joyous saints  
Who love to do Jesus' will.  
You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea,  
In church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea,  
For the saints of God are just folk like me,  
And I mean to be one, too."<sup>34</sup>

"The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13,RSV) is the New Testament definition of maturity, and the saints are those who are seeking to be faithful. They still fail to be obedient servants, they give way to selfishness, and they are separated from God and their fellows. But they have the capacity for repentance, and therefore they are assured that by God's grace they are forgiven.

Congregations achieve this level of spiritual maturity. When the forgiveness that God promises is evident in the relationships of the congregation, the sinner knows that he is not cast out of the fellowship but that his membership is restored when he is repentant. The channels of grace given through the congregation are open to him when the way is hard and long, so that he is sustained in his vocation to serve the Lord with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. When this quality of life is evident to those of all ages within the congregation, Christian education takes place, for every member knows that he shares in the Biblical

<sup>33</sup> Albert C. Outler, *Psychotherapy and the Christian Message* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 184.

<sup>34</sup> *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 243, stanza 3. By permission of Morehouse-Gorham Co.

drama of redemption and lives in *Act IV* (Church) of God's mighty acts in history. He knows, furthermore, that *Act V* (Consummation) impinges upon him at every moment, and this arouses his awe and his hope rather than his fear. He is not anxious about the morrow, because he knows he is in the redemptive and sustaining community *now*.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONSUMMATION

“THE BIBLE is complete. But the sacred history is not yet completed. . . . There is the kingdom to come, the ultimate consummation.”<sup>1</sup> This expectation of the consummation of the kingdom runs throughout the New Testament and there is always a tension between the kingdom that has been realized and the kingdom yet to come. This paradox appears in Jesus’ teachings, in Paul’s letters, vividly in the book of Revelation, and while the kingdom is spiritualized in the Fourth Gospel it is still there as an historic expectation.

Jesus’ ministry takes up the refrain of John the Baptist: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15, RSV). “Kingdom” means a community under the “kingship” or “reign” or “sovereignty” of God, and the implication is that God is *now* exerting his rule over the world. This is a new day; the good news is that the kingdom of God is at hand and men must respond to the conditions of God’s rule by a change of heart.

Eschatology is a term meaning the doctrine of last things and deals with heaven and hell, death and judgment. In the New Testament it is expressed chiefly in the idea of the coming kingdom of God. “The coming of God’s Reign is a miraculous event,” writes Rudolf Bultmann, “which will be brought about by

<sup>1</sup> Georges Florovsky, “Revelation and Interpretation,” in *Biblical Authority for Today*, ed. by Alan Richardson and Wolfgang Schweitzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), p. 179.

God alone without the help of men.”<sup>2</sup> Already the kingdom is dawning, for this age has run its course. Therefore, now is the time for making a decision, for it is the last hour. One must be ready to renounce anything for the sake of the kingdom.

The reign of God is evident in the deeds and teachings of Jesus. The miracles are chiefly to be understood in terms of eschatology, so that what Jesus does indicates the power of God. In the Beelzebub controversy, Jesus says, “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28, RSV). In Jesus’ teachings we find this theme of the kingdom running throughout most of the parables. There is a “germinal” kingdom which is present, and the consummation is certain. It is God’s kingdom and not ours; yet we must do something about it *now*.

There is a tension between the idea that the kingdom is here and that it is coming. The kingdom *has* come in Jesus Christ, but it is coming in the future. The idea of the second coming of Christ points to the consummation at the end of history, and while the primitive Christian view foreshortened the expectation to their own generation, there is no doubt that history will come to an end. As John Knox writes, “It is really impossible to harmonize these two conceptions: Christ the Spirit and Christ the expected eschatological Judge and Savior. But it is also impossible to eliminate either strain from early Christian thinking about Jesus.”<sup>3</sup>

This tension, suggests Stephen Neill, is a safeguard against assuming the finality of our own culture, while at the same time it emphasizes that in the midst of man’s rebellion God’s purposes will be achieved through men’s cooperation. “The Biblical ideal for man is social; it is that of a fellowship in a society which

<sup>2</sup> *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), I, 4; see pp. 4-11.

<sup>3</sup> John Knox, *Christ the Lord* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), p. 105; see *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. by Alan Richardson (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 119-121.

resembles a flock under a shepherd, where justice is tempered with mercy, and man lives in neighbourliness with others of his kind.”<sup>4</sup> This is no guarantee of progress, for the seeds of destruction are found in every advance, and fulfillment will come only with the final judgment. At best, this world may be a province of the kingdom, but man’s true citizenship is in heaven.

Once we recognize the tension between the present and the future kingdom, we discover that the concept works in three areas: first, cultures and civilizations are doomed by the judgment of God when they fail morally to keep the covenant; second, individuals face judgment as they live and when they die; third, because the end of existence on this earth is certain, the only hope of eternal meaning lies with God.<sup>5</sup> There is nothing “mythological” about this, for a study of history shows that no culture has endured, no person has avoided death, and the earth’s energy will some day run down, with or without an assist from the atomic scientists.

#### REDEMPTION NOW

The Bible is “social sacred history.” The drama of redemption moves from creation and covenant, through Christ as the midpoint, to this Church and the Spirit where we now stand, and we are facing the kingdom which we pray will “come on earth as it is in heaven.” We can see a “realized eschatology” in social history. Living as we do in *Act IV* (Church) of the drama of redemption, we see that what happens *now* is of the greatest importance. The Church is carrying the Gospel to increasing numbers throughout the world, and this is a pledge of the coming kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Neill, “Civilization,” in *Biblical Authority for Today*, ed. by Alan Richardson and Wolfgang Schweitzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), p. 337.

<sup>5</sup> See Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 218-219.

<sup>6</sup> See J. Robert Nelson, *The Realm of Redemption* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1951), p. 227.



The Church's life, when it is truly redemptive, provides a foretaste of the eternal relationship with the heavenly Father. But it is more than this. The Fourth Gospel insists that we have eternal life *now*, not just as a promise for the future. *If redemption is a fact and not just a pledge, there is a shared fellowship now.* We believe in a living God and a risen Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the gift of God's love *now*. Jesus promised that "the kingdom of God is in your midst" or "among you" or, possibly, "within you" (Luke 17:21). The Johannine literature goes beyond the Synoptic record at this point, saying, "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in the world" (I John 4:16b-17, RSV). To say less than this is to deny the power of the Gospel to give us new life.

#### JUDGMENT

While the kingdom is to some extent realized in social history, we need to see this under the note of *judgment*, which means "the act by which justice is done; it also means that which is right, whether custom, the rights of the individual or group, the right in general, or simply justice."<sup>7</sup>

The rule of God in the world now is an act of judgment in this sense. We are under God's sovereignty, and therefore as his subjects we are the agents of judgment or justice. This provides the basis not only for personal activity to make things right, but also for the activity of the Church in the social realm. This was the basic insight of the Old Testament prophets and it was not lost in the New Testament message. The exponents of the social Gospel are right in their insistence that the Church has widespread social and political responsibilities. The eschatological framework of the New Testament placed the insights of social morality within the narrow time-span of the imminent end of the age, and good

<sup>7</sup> Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology*, p. 173.

Biblical theology needs to rethink the implications for social ethics in terms of the altered time perspective of today.

The Biblical act of God's judgment means deliverance for those who are wronged and condemnation for those who do wrong. Because judgment is an act of a loving God, its purpose is always redemptive, and only the hardness of men's hearts makes it retributive. The nations stand under judgment in this double sense, for God is always seeking the redemption of man, and by their stiff-necked resistance they bring the issue of punishment and retribution to the fore. The Churches also stand under this same double judgment, and while God uses the Churches for the redemption of individuals and groups, the rigidity of the Churches' formularies causes the breaking of community. When we look at smaller groups, such as the family, we can see the judgment of God at work for their redemption, but the response is such that judgment becomes the means of disintegration.

As individuals we share the double hope of being a member of the kingdom now and of facing the kingdom when it comes. There is a realized eschatology for individuals, for God enters into personal relations with us and by the power of Christ we are redeemed. We come into the right relationship with God, are obedient to him, and seek his will in all that we think or do. We serve him in terms of our relations with other people, in our attempt to organize a just society, and in our membership in the Church which seeks to take the Gospel to all men. To the extent that this is approximated, God rules in our persons. To the extent that our personalities are made whole, that our faith becomes mature, and that we grow into the fulness of Christ, God's kingdom is present on earth. This idea of the kingdom has been too individualized in some Protestant communions, but it is a sound concept when kept within the fellowship of the Church. As a member of Christ's Church, I am capable of receiving the grace of God, so that I may walk worthy of the vocation to which he has called me.

But it is quite obvious that as an individual I do not serve God wholeheartedly. I become separated from God by my own wilfulness, even when I know that I am created to serve him. Even when I know my place in *Act IV* of the drama of redemption and accept my membership in the Church as a regenerate child of our heavenly Father, I disobey him. I know the wretchedness of Paul as I admit that "there is no health in me" and I am "a miserable sinner." Because I have this "burden which is intolerable," I know myself to be under judgment, and again it is a dual judgment whereby I know that God seeks my redemption if I will respond in faith but that I am to be punished if I refuse him. My hope is that I will be justified by faith, not that I will earn salvation by merit.<sup>8</sup>

This kind of judgment runs throughout the entire life of the individual, so that he knows the meaning of both heaven and hell in this life. In a very short time, he meets the consummation of his drama. Nations have centuries in which to face judgment and mankind as a whole has the historic process, but the individual has only his threescore years and ten (plus or minus a few years). The certainty of death and judgment stands over him like a cloud. "In the midst of life we are in death." During his life, he lives in *Act IV* (Church) of the drama with *Act V* (Consummation) always intervening, but suddenly he finds himself at the consummation of his own part in the final act.

#### LIFE AFTER DEATH

The Biblical faith in life after death does not need to be argued. There is no doubt of the *hope* of resurrection and of the *fear* of damnation. The great last things of eschatology are death, judgment, heaven, and hell. The picturesque language by which these realities are described and the seeming contradictions need not disturb us. There are no blueprints of the hereafter, and we

<sup>8</sup> See D. R. Davies, *Down Peacock Feathers* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), for a remarkable treatment of the General Confession.

know that God loves us. Our thinking about immortality begins with the nature of God revealed in the mighty acts he has performed in history, and from this we move on to what is promised for us if we believe in the Son whom he has sent. "This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life" (I John 5:11-12a,RSV). The hope of resurrection is that hope of an eternal relationship with the heavenly Father, while in contrast stands the hell of eternal separation from him.

Central to the worship of the Church lies the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Often this worship is a mystical experience which provides a sense of oneness with Christ, but often it evaporates into an emotional state with no particular outlets. When we see the tension between the past and the future, the present is charged with meaning. When Paul recounted the story of the institution of the Lord's Supper, he added, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Cor. 11:26,RSV). We live in the stage between a memory and a great hope, in *Act IV* (Church) of the drama of redemption. We remember what Christ has done for us in *Act III* and we proclaim God's final victory at the end of time when *Act V* is consummated. Therefore, *Act IV* is meaningful *now* for our salvation. The Church, then, is not the kingdom on earth or even a mediator. It is the community which proclaims the kingdom and proclaims judgment, and because it is chosen to proclaim judgment it is subject to that judgment. The Church is not the end of history or even an infallible community for today, but is a channel of grace. The Church is sacramental because the sacraments symbolize the relationships between God and man, showing how these relationships are broken by sin and healed by God's love. In baptism we are made regenerate by God's grace, and in the Lord's Supper we come into the real presence of Christ through faith. Thus the Church avoids the danger of being the company of those who know themselves to be saved which is one

element in the sin of pride, and the Church becomes the community of sinners who know the hope of eternal salvation.

The life of the Church, when it is truly the Church, provides a foretaste of the kingdom. The genuine community of a congregation of faithful people who know themselves to stand under judgment is a province of the kingdom of God on earth.

Reinhold Niebuhr, in pointing out the dangers facing the Church, describes what it ought to be: "The Christian Church is a community of hopeful believers, who are not afraid of life or death, of present or future history, being persuaded that the whole of life and all historical vicissitudes stand under the sovereignty of a holy, yet merciful, God whose will was supremely revealed in Christ. It is a community which does not fear the final judgment, not because it is composed of sinless saints but because it is a community of forgiven sinners, who know that judgment is merciful if it is not evaded. If the divine judgment is not resisted by pretensions of virtue but is contritely accepted, it reveals in and beyond itself the mercy which restores life on a new and healthier basis."<sup>9</sup>

#### THE SECOND COMING

If the consummation stands over us now and meets us at the end of our earthly lives, what about the ultimate end? The Old Testament idea of the Day of Yahweh is retained in the New Testament with the preaching of the end of the age, the second coming of Christ, and the destruction of the wicked. We have this in highly pictorial language in Revelation and in spiritualized form in the Johannine literature, and it runs throughout the Synoptic Gospels and Paul's letters. We cannot escape the idea of a last judgment at the end of history. The expectation that this would occur during the generation of Jesus' disciples was obviously false,

<sup>9</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Faith and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 238; see pp. 235-243.



but the principle is essential to any Biblical theology. The creeds put it this way: "From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. . . . And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead."

Burton Scott Easton, summarizing the views of most scholars, included these words among the genuine teachings of Jesus: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory and shall gather all the nations before him. And he shall separate them from one another before him, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he shall set his sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left hand" (Matt. 25:31-33, Easton's translation). Paul echoes the same view: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16-17, RSV).

No matter what Paul may have believed, people today do not take such statements literally. We place such descriptions in the category of myth or of symbolic meaning, just as we do the clause in the creed, "and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." The religious meaning is that life is a serious business, that our acts are of sufficient importance to God to cause him to stand over us in judgment. We are accountable to God for every thought and act. He not only will judge us, but he judges us now and judges those who have died.

The second coming of Christ is the symbol of the end of creation. The atom bomb made us more aware than before that this earth could be ended by man's act of self-destruction, but it did not change the situation in which we find ourselves.

The second coming of Christ is also a symbol of the constant judgment of God and of the promise of redemption. The Church year recounts this at Christmas time when we sing,

"O holy child of Bethlehem!  
Descend to us, we pray. . . ." <sup>10</sup>

Advent is always a preparation for the coming of Christ.

"New advent of the love of Christ,  
Shall we again refuse thee,  
Till in the night of hate and war  
We perish as we lose thee?  
From old unfaith our souls release  
To seek the kingdom of thy peace,  
By which alone we choose thee." <sup>11</sup>

Act V (Consummation) of the drama of redemption ends on a note of judgment but also on a note of hope. The promise of the final victory over evil is given in God's kingdom. To the extent that his kingdom is realized on earth, we have the foretaste of the heavenly kingdom. But even in Act IV (Church) we know what it means to be in the right relationship with God and our fellows, and we know that we grow in grace. "The wisdom of life lies in the discovery that joy belongs only to him who can submit all his own hopes to the cause of the great community of good which life on earth can never fully define or capture." <sup>12</sup> God never forsakes us, and judgment does not cause us to fear because we have confidence in his mercy as revealed in Jesus Christ.

#### THE CONSUMMATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

How are we to take children into Act V, which is based on the memory of past events, our experiences of the present, and our hope for the future? Their actual existence in Act IV is something they can experience. The impact of persons whose main

<sup>10</sup> Phillips Brooks, *The Hymnal* 1940 (New York: Church Pension Fund, 1943), No. 21, stanza 5.

<sup>11</sup> From *Lift Up Your Hearts* by Walter Russell Bowie. Copyright 1939, 1956, by Pierce & Washabaugh. By permission of Abingdon Press.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Day Williams, *God's Grace and Man's Hope* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 197.

purpose is to make things right and achieve justice for children is within the scope of their relationships. So far as *Act V* is a fact of contemporary experience, they know God as their judge, who comes into relationship with them to make things right and who treats them as upright because of their faith. They cannot verbalize such concepts as these, but through the ministry of their parents and others they experience such relationships.

Until they are ten or eleven, the best psychologists tell us, children have little sense of history, and they cannot tell time until they are eight. Therefore, an understanding of the past acts of God is impossible. No appeal to the future is meaningful until a boy or girl approaches the teens. Younger children see the whole drama of redemption as it is evident in their present experiences.

If the local parish seeks to be a community of hopeful believers, as described by Reinhold Niebuhr, are there not some starting points in the life of the congregation? What will children learn simply by being organic parts of a group that knows that "perfect love casts out fear"? What will they learn because the congregation knows each member is in need of forgiveness? What will they learn because judgment within the congregation is merciful? What is the reaction of the congregation to the facts of suffering and death?

#### NURSERY

Because "there is no fear in love," the way in which the nursery child is treated is more important than anything he is told. The chief word in the language of relationships is love. It is love which overcomes the anxieties and insecurities of this life. The little child who comes into a strange new world needs the reassuring hand, the encouraging smile, the kind voice. When he feels like an outsider, he needs to be drawn into the group on his own terms. When he makes a mistake, he knows it is all right because he did not intend to do it. When he deliberately disobeys, or

when he kicks up a tantrum, the teacher tries to see beneath the surface symptoms to the underlying cause. The simplest way of explaining this atmosphere of acceptance is to say, "God loves you," or perhaps to offer a brief prayer thanking God for his love.

Normally the problem of death does not occur to the child under five, and it needs to be treated only if death strikes near at hand. He will learn most from the way his elders react and from how this affects his security. When the loss is acute, such as the death of a parent, he needs to be surrounded with whatever love and security is available. Reassurance in words have meaning only when it is accompanied by relationships that help him through this crisis. If questions are asked, they must be answered simply and honestly.

#### KINDERGARTEN

The handling of death for kindergarten is similar to that for nursery. Now, however, he is more ready to speak of his experiences of death—he may see a pet die, or he may know of a neighbor who has died. He asks questions that are difficult to answer within the limitations of the child's concepts. Often parents try to avoid an answer, or they speak with quivering voices, or they give incorrect information.<sup>13</sup>

The element of judgment does not enter the experience of death, and this is not the time to bring up the problem of heaven and hell. The reassurance that death is part of life, that God loves those who die, and that we are loved by those around us, are the ideas that we need to impart.

The kindergartner is still primarily concerned with satisfying his elders, and judgment to him is the experience of displeasure by his elders when he fails to perform up to their expectations. It is better at this point to praise what he has done than to condemn him for his failures.

<sup>13</sup> See my *The Clue to Christian Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 192-200, on children and death.

## PRIMARY

Primary children cannot understand judgment historically, but they see it in their own lives. They are facing the problem of living in an adult world, with the rules of home and school providing discipline and judgment. When these rules are properly administered the children can see that they are for their own good, and even for their own pleasure, and thus judgment is creative; but when the rules are simply restrictions which thwart the natural tendencies of childhood, or when the rules are disobeyed even when they are good, the experience of judgment is retributive or punitive. In many cases the act of judgment ends at this point, without moving on to a creative experience of renewal of relationship with the class or teacher, or with parents in the home. This kind of judgment is based upon the need for law and order, but it is a Christian experience only when backed by the redemptive love which heals the relationship.

The fact of death is acute for most primary children. While not many of this age die, they become aware of the fact that they will die. This is a great shock to their awareness of being alive, which seems an eternal fact. Some of them develop a fear of the dark or of going to sleep, because they might die. They also fear that their parents might die, and this upsets their security which depends still on their parents. And in some cases, they experience the death of a parent. Explanations will help some, but besides a few factual statements of belief in the simplest terms, there is nothing much to be said. The danger is that wrong answers, or thoughtless ones, will be given. Sometimes it will be denied that anyone has died; he has just "gone away for a while." Or they will be told, "Mommy's body is in the ground," or, "They burned her up," with no further information. Children need to talk freely in such situations, to keep alive the memory of the one who has died, and to have answers repeated as reassurance that those who die are with God in spirit.



A third-grader came home with the news that a classmate with whom she had been ice skating the previous week had died. It was a tragic occurrence, and the conversation between the child and her parents began on the note of tragedy. They not only were sorry for the little girl but also for her parents. They dwelt on this note long enough for sympathy to be established between them. Then came the reassurance of the Gospel that those who die are safe in the presence of God. We cannot see them or go to them, but we know that they are with God whom no one can see. The conversation concluded with a look at the *World Almanac*, in which they discovered that boys and girls between the ages of seven and fourteen have the *lowest death rate* of any age group. This final fact provided a sense of security for the child, who now knew that the chances of her own death were very slight, that everyone would be sorry if she died, and that God stood as a final reassurance if anything should happen.

The consummation of the drama for little children, then, is in terms of understanding the relationships of daily living. The Christian doctrine of last things is experienced primarily in the judgment of law on their own activities and to the fact of death in their own experience. Because they fear their own death and the death of their parents, a simple understanding that when people die their spirits are with God must be part of any primary teaching.

#### JUNIORS

With juniors, aged nine to twelve, a whole new world has opened. They can think in terms of past, present, and future, although only the sixth-graders can handle historical material well enough to conceive of an end to history. Somewhere along the way, they will have picked up the distinctions between heaven and hell, even if only in the language of the alley. Probably someone will have identified hell with eternal fire and heaven with golden

harps, and sometimes hell will seem the more interesting of the two. It is an interesting comment on the "good news" of the Gospel that hell so often seems more exciting, not only to juniors but to many adults as well, just as the activities of the opponents of Dick Tracy and Roy Rogers are often more thrilling than what happens in Church.

Juniors see death as many as a dozen times an evening on television. They read about automobile, airplane, and train fatalities. They are used to war news. They see pictures of priests administering extreme unction to fatally wounded Roman Catholics and are sure this will get them to heaven, but perhaps they are not so sure about Protestants, who don't even have masses for the dead or pray for them. We can explain to juniors the facts about death. They will want to know about cremation and burial, and perhaps even about the details of embalming. They will make the distinction between the body and "the part I can't see." This is very rarely questioned. They will have heard of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, simply by being members of "the community of the resurrection," and they may like the following explanation:

"Resurrection means coming to life again after one is dead. We do not know *how* this will happen, but we know we will be with God. Perhaps this is the best definition of heaven: *to be with God*. And maybe hell means: *to be separated from God*. Jesus Christ came to tell us that after this life, we will be with God, we will have eternal life."<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps the old children's hymn said it best,

"Let my sins be all forgiven;  
Bless the friends I love so well:  
Take us all at last to heaven,  
Happy there with thee to dwell."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Margaret Brown, *Behold Thy Family* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> *The Hymnal* 1940, No. 241, stanza 3.

Of course, juniors will ask many questions about judgment. They will wonder who is going to heaven and who isn't. One twelve-year-old, in answer to questions, said that "No one knows who is going to heaven and who isn't." Then he said, "What a priest does, doesn't make any difference, and neither do prayers for the dead." Then he was asked who decides, and he answered, "You do. You choose heaven or hell yourself." When he was asked if you could *know* you were going to heaven, he said, "No."

#### WORSHIP

Both juniors and intermediates will learn much from the Church's worship. They have seen Easter services for several years, with its emphasis both on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and on the theme of immortality. When they have the background of the study of the life, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is best taught to intermediates, they can see the deeper meaning of Easter. Older intermediates and senior-highs might also have studied some of the great passages often read at funeral services. Opportunities will arise to attend burial services for friends both young and old, and in congregations where the Easter theme is dominant in the burial service this can be an experience of deepening faith.

The idea of judgment is not necessarily associated with death. As we have pointed out, judgment is a recurring experience throughout the whole of life. The earlier *Act II* (covenant), when the covenant was based on Law, is picked up by Paul who teaches that the Law convicts us of sin. The sense of justice and fair play among juniors offers opportunity to teaching the meaning of judgment both in its redemptive and punitive sense. Experiences in student or class government frequently provide instances where the group judges an individual. The conflicts in loyalties between gang, classroom, family, and church provide difficult decisions for the preadolescents.

## JUNIOR HIGH

As the horizon of interest widens with the junior-highs, they see the judgment of God at work in society. Not only do they see the results of war, but they are aware of crime and dishonesty which often shows its first indications in the early adolescent period. They are aware of schoolmates who are under supervision from social workers, of others who are expelled, and of those who break the code and get away with it. They are in the company of friends who lie to their parents, cheat in class and with money, and who practice little forms of thievery. They ask the age-old question, "Why are people bad?" They can make sense of the statement of Paul: "I do not do the good things that I want to do; I do the wrong things that I do not want to do. But if I do the things that I do not want to do, it is not I that am acting, it is sin, which has possession of me. . . . What a wretched man I am! Who can save me from this doomed body? Thank God! It is done through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 8:19-20, 24-25a, G). This realization is the beginning of religious maturity, and they see that faith is essentially loyalty, and sin is essentially treason, and yet sin can take possession of them when they least expect it. Here is a judgment on the ego which can provide the stimulus for religious growth.

## SENIOR HIGH

I doubt if we can do much with the final judgment that stands beyond history except with rather mature high-school students and older young people. If all we want is a literal acceptance of a Day of the Lord, coming at a specific time in history, junior-highs can visualize what we mean but are likely to reject it. But if the last judgment is the completion of God's purpose for the historical process that he has created, standing beyond anything that we can know or imagine, we are combining the historical with the supra-

historical in a way too sophisticated for younger Christians. The "second coming of Christ," which appears in the collects of liturgical churches during the Advent season, is not likely to have much meaning except when interpreted as the return of the living Christ who is born in our hearts each Christmastime.

The teen-age group in a parish can come to a genuine understanding of judgment, of seeing that they are responsible for their own moral predicament and that by their own power they cannot get out of it. This is in direct contrast to what they are being taught in secular education about the power to adjust, the positive thinking that will solve their problems, and the utopian hope that a perfect society is just around the corner. The teen-ager is particularly susceptible to this teaching because he is going through a period of orientation. He is half-child and half-man, and is forced to relate himself to the adult world on the one hand and to the opposite sex on the other. He is not sure of himself in either area, and finds that he can gain autonomy in neither. While this problem is faced first in an adolescent setting, coming to terms with the world of maturity is an on-going process, and the establishment of autonomy is never completed.

If the parish church is able to use these predicaments of the teen-ager in relation to the resources of the Christian Gospel, not only will there be a dynamic youth program which meets the needs of the youngsters, but there will be new life in the entire parish. Charles D. Kean writes that "this is where the note of judgment comes in. To the extent that young people are led to believe that the tensions they encounter can simply be dealt with by some kind of adjustment to their own psychological drives on the one hand, or adjustment to the demands of external society on the other, the deeper meaning of the tensions is lost. If, instead, young people in actual contact with real tensions involving the question of life's very meaning can discover these to be not only issues of adjustment, which on one level they certainly are, but also clues to where they themselves stand in God's universe, then



something creative happens.”<sup>16</sup> This happens when they see the relevance of the Gospel to their classes, cliques, and romance. They see that techniques, going through stages of development, making new adjustments, following the suggestions of the advertisers for tooth paste, cold cream, and even muscle building is not enough. Life’s illusions of the marks of success are destroyed, and they no longer want to be “men of distinction.” Growing up is a natural and painful process, and it can be looked at from the point of view of secular society; but to the Christian it has a deeper meaning as young people find resources in the Gospel for facing the judgment of God upon them and their problems. The autonomy they need is not the satisfaction of the ego but the service of their Lord and Master.

Young people, going through this process, see their baptism in a new light. They have been made “members of Christ” as they were “received into the congregation of Christ’s flock.” When they are confirmed or join the Church, this relationship is clarified, and they see their responsibility both to the fellowship that has nurtured them with love and acceptance, discipline, freedom to grow, and the grace of God, and their personal responsibility to God who made all this possible.

Such a program as this is not only possible, it is highly successful wherever it is tried, either in youth groups or in Church school.

Our children and young people, through the relationships of parish life, within their limitations as growing children, experience the realization of the kingdom of God in whatever redemptive experiences life may offer them; they experience judgment on themselves and upon their community or nation as the moral law of a righteous God marks them as sinners in need of forgiveness; and as they see that death is a sure and certain experience, they know that a loving God will show them justice and mercy as they face the sure and certain hope of resurrection unto eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> Charles D. Kean, *The Christian Gospel and the Parish Church* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), pp. 88-89.

They know themselves to stand in a world where God's will is done, where God's will is rebelled against, and where God's will eventually will be worked out at the end of history. So they learn to stand in faith, hope, and love within the redemptive community which is the true Church, looking back to the memory of him who came that we might have life and have it in abundance, looking to the living Christ who through the Holy Spirit mediates the grace of God to us today, and looking to the consummation in the second coming of Christ as he stands beyond history. The victory is already won.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### COMMITMENT

THE BIBLICAL story is the recounting of events whereby God revealed himself to man for the sake of man's redemption. It also tells of man's redemption, and it is man's history as well as God's. It is the record of man's response to God's grace. It is the account of how man has sought to understand God. It is a progressive revelation in terms of what man has learned, although we believe that God does not change. There is a difference *in concept* between the primitive God of battles and the Father of Jesus Christ, but it is the same God who reveals himself.

The psalmist asks the question, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and the answer comes,

"Yet thou hast made him little less than God,  
and dost crown him with glory and honor.  
Thou has given him dominion over the works of thy hands;  
thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:4-6, RSV).

Man's place in God's order of creation is established. He is a creature and therefore is "less than God," but he is chief among the creatures and is intended to have dominion over the rest of creation. His response to what God has done has been uneven, so that he has broken his personal relationship with God.

Sin is acting against God. Violation of the law is sin because it is the violation of persons. Sin is rebellion against God and against his creation. It is expressed in specific acts. The New Testament contains lists of sinful acts and virtuous attitudes.

Taking only twenty such passages, Frederick C. Grant finds a total of 115 sinful terms, most of which apply to small groups. Except in the teachings of Jesus, lists of sins are longer than the lists of virtues.<sup>1</sup>

These sins, however, are more than breaking the moral law. Man suffers from a sinful condition, a condition of being separated from God and from his fellows, due to his rebellion against God. He may keep the moral law for the wrong reasons and therefore be guilty of hypocrisy and pride. "The essence of sin is disbelief, the state of estrangement from God, the flight from him, the rebellion against him, the elevation of preliminary concerns to the rank of ultimate concern," writes Paul Tillich.<sup>2</sup> The self gets in the center of the picture and this crowds God out. The whole self is infected by self-love, and this concern for the ego means that man cannot forget himself. "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39, RSV).

Man's response to all of this is to seek to live in faith. He finds that his Christian faith is relevant to his daily living. He is involved in ethical decisions and actions on both the personal and social level. As Bishop William Scarlett writes:

"We believe that Christianity is not something irrelevant to life, not something that touches only the fringes of life, not something of little importance which we can take or leave as we like. Rather we believe that Christianity is the truth about man, about man's relation to God and God's relation to the world, and about man's relation to his fellow men. It is either the Rock on which we build our civilization or else it is the Rock against which civilization will continue to pound itself to pieces."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *An Introduction to New Testament Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), pp. 176-182.

<sup>2</sup> *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> William Scarlett, ed., *Christianity Takes a Stand* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1946), p. 1.

As man responds in faith to the grace offered him in Jesus Christ, he discovers the Christian demand that the relationship of brotherhood should be made basic to all his connections of life. The areas of responsibility established by God include marriage and the family, the nurturing of the fruits of the earth, the use of skills in the service of mankind, and the ordering of life through political means. Man is responsible to God for his relationships wherever two or three are gathered together as the smallest social unit and wherever larger groups are related until the whole earth is involved. There is, then, no distinction between an individual and a social Gospel, for the Gospel tells us that God is the Lord of all life.

A realistic view of man's ethical responsibilities takes us back to the Biblical doctrine of sin. Even when we are most assured of our social and ethical obligations, we are concerned to protect our own interests, and often on the level of property or money or social position. We become skillful in disguising our motives and our self-deception often approaches that of genius. We assume that laws of justice will automatically remove social inequalities. We delude ourselves that we can substitute law for human relationships, and thus the law itself is thwarted. The Biblical view of law is always seen within the covenant relationship, which transcends the law by giving it life through the Spirit. "For the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life" (II Cor. 3:6b, RSV), as Saint Paul put it.

#### VOCATION

The New Testament answer to man's predicament is found in the Christian doctrine of *vocation*. In the letter to the Ephesians, after a summary has been given of the drama of salvation, the author turns to the problem of ethics with this word, "*Therefore.*" Because you are saved by grace through faith, *therefore* you are "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called"



(Eph. 4:1,RSV).<sup>4</sup> This Biblical pattern goes back to the Old Testament, where the Law is given *after* Israel has been saved. "Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph. 4:7,RSV), and our specific callings are different one from the other.

This emphasis on the varieties of specific callings is the reason why the Sunday school admonition to "be like Jesus" is silly. In the first place, his perfection is unattainable for us, and therefore to insist on following the pattern of his life creates the anxieties of an impossible moralism rather than the confidence of Christian hope. His example has relevance in terms of his obedience to *his* calling, and therefore we are to respond to the appeal of his love. In the second place, his vocation is different from ours. The true question is, "What work does Christ lay on us?" Martin Luther faced this question as follows:

"You ask, Why did not Christ and the apostles bear the sword? Why did He not also take a wife, or become a cobbler or tailor? If an occupation or office is not good because Christ Himself did not occupy it, what would become of all occupations and offices, with the exception of the ministry which alone He exercised? Christ fulfilled His own office and vocation, but thereby did not reject any other. It was not meet that He should bear the sword, for He was to bear only that office by which His kingdom is governed and which properly serves His kingdom. Now it does not concern His kingdom that He should be a married man, a cobbler, a tailor, a farmer, a prince, a hangman or a beadle, neither is the sword of secular law of any concern, but only God's Word and Spirit, by which His people are inwardly governed."<sup>5</sup>

Vocation is work, but it is more. It is also man's total response

<sup>4</sup> See Theodore O. Wedel's exposition in *The Interpreter's Bible*, X, 681-683.

<sup>5</sup> From Luther's "Secular Authority; To What Extent Should It Be Obeyed?" in *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, ed. by Hugh Thompson Kerr, Jr. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), p. 219.

to God in the situation in which he finds himself. Daniel Day Williams writes that "the clue to ethical reconstruction is this: *The living God whose nature and purpose is love calls us to respond in our freedom to the tasks which are set for us by the fact that He is at work in our human history both as Creator and as Redeemer.*"<sup>6</sup> This is a broader view than that of Luther and it recaptures the full implications of Paul's doctrine.

Early Christians found that their choice of work was limited by the contamination with the world that many tasks demanded. They could take no political office, for such a position involved idol worship or the worship of the Emperor. But as most Christians came from the lower classes, this restriction was not severe. What caused them economic hardship was that they could accept no occupation that might serve pagan worship, which involved not only the building trades but also dealing in certain foods and flowers used in pagan temples. Even school teaching was out of bounds because the textbooks approved idolatry and worship of the Emperor. Their witness to the evils of society was by their withdrawal from most of the occupations open to them. "They remain on earth, but they are citizens of heaven," as the *Address to Diognetus* put it.

The Gospel provides a framework for one's vocation, but the framework is of attitudes and relationships rather than of specific duties. Within this transformed relationship, decisions are made. When one has accepted Jesus as his Christ, this new relationship is established. It is a fact of his existence, just as the natural world is a fact of existence. He is a member of the community of the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus is his Christ and he is a member of the body of which Christ is the Head, he makes his decisions within that framework. *He may make the same ethical decisions as his brother in the ethical culture society, but he makes them for a different reason.* Because he knows the meaning of the Gospel,

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Day Williams, *God's Grace and Man's Hope* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 147. Italics his.

and accepts the cross and resurrection in his own life, he seeks through grace to be obedient to what God wants him to do. And because he knows that God is personal and that his relationship with God is a matter of personal communion, he knows that the Gospel supersedes the law. It is impossible for him to accept the Kantian absolute that every man should act alike in the same situation, for God may demand that one man act differently from another in the light of his calling.

#### LOVE

The Christian is enjoined to love his neighbor as himself. This is an impossible imperative, in that no one ever achieves such love with any consistency whatever. There are moments when it is achieved, and we glory in the deeds of those who demonstrate complete self-giving love. Love means that every person is to be treated as a *Thou* and no person is to be used as a *thing*. Every grouping of persons must be protected against the impersonal forces of the mass man by guaranteeing freedom of relationships. The Church deals with the whole man and with all men in their total environment, seeking always to be a redemptive and sustaining community in which men will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to treat their fellows with love, accepting them as they are and opening the way to confrontation with Jesus Christ. The "I-Thou" relationship runs throughout the whole of Christian living.

In the love relationship we recognize the priority of God's love. This is evident in the Biblical drama in the stories of creation and covenant, but it is in the coming of Christ that the fact of love becomes inescapable. "God's love for us has been revealed in this way—that God has sent his only Son into the world to let us have life through him" (I John 4:9,G). "We love because he first loved us" (I John 4:19,G). The requirement that we love both God and our fellow men is clear in Jesus' summary of the law, where the two commandments are "equal." So we say that "if anyone

says, 'I love God,' and yet hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen" (I John 4:20,G).

All else that may be said about Christian ethics is a spelling out of the requirement to love God and our fellow men. Because they are corollaries of the commandment to love, they are inferences which lack the authority of the primary commandment. Love becomes the means whereby we interpret all other commandments.

This relationship of love provides certain attitudes. "We have perfect confidence about the Day of Judgment" (I John 4:17,G), and therefore *Act V* is the consummation of our hopes rather than of our fears. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear" (I John 4:18,G), and therefore we know what Jesus meant when he said, "Do not be anxious about your life" (Matt. 5:25, RSV). This non-anxious, non-fearing, and confident attitude opens in us a readiness to do what God wills in every situation.

Because God who is love is the creator of this world, we know that the earth is good. Because God is Lord of history, we know that it is our duty to do his will in this life. History is important to God, or else he would not be at work in its processes. The symbol of the second coming, as John S. Whale reminds us, is a "way of expressing the reality of God's purpose within history."<sup>7</sup> We have eternal life now, on this earth, even though we still have to die. The full meaning of history is known only to God who stands beyond history, and yet we are participants now in the process whereby that meaning becomes clear.

#### JUSTICE

In order to live in faith according to the requirement that we love each other, we are enjoined "as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (Luke 6:31,RSV; see Matt. 7:12). This

<sup>7</sup> James S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 180.



means a society organized in terms of justice, whereby each *child* will receive his due. The child cannot claim the justice due to him, and therefore the test of justice backed by love is to give it to those who cannot claim it. The demand here is for *empathy*, seeing life through another's eyes, whereby the true needs of the other will be recognized and served. Too often, the needs of one individual are projected onto the other, and the latter's real needs are not met. The Christian is guided by this corollary to the law of love, but without love behind it the ethical requirement may fail to achieve a personal relationship within the Christian community.

The Christian is concerned also that the social order provide opportunities for the practice of freedom, social fellowship, and service of others. The early Church knew no political freedom, but there was freedom within the community of the faithful. Their social fellowship was equally restricted. But this was not a restriction of the Gospel. The inference of the command to love is that it should be universal. The love of God is shown in that Jesus Christ died for the redemption of *all mankind*. The limitations of the early Church in its social impact and in the occupations open to its members were due to the environment in which it found itself. The Church has a message that takes us beyond the congregation and the surrounding country to the nation and to the world at large. The "ecumenical reformation" has widened the scope of the Church's conscience and this must be reflected in the consciences of individuals.

#### CHURCH UNDER JUDGMENT

The Christian in the Church is concerned about the Church as a redemptive community. The scandal of Christendom is its divisions, and within a denomination or within the local congregation we find most of the sins we are seeking to remove in the world outside the Church. H. Richard Niebuhr shows that denominationalism "carries over into the organization of the Christian principle of brotherhood the prides and prejudices, the privilege



and prestige, as well as the humiliations and abasements, the injustices and inequalities of that specious order of high and low wherein men find the satisfaction of their craving for vainglory. The division of the churches closely follows the division of men into the castes of national, racial, and economic groups. It draws the color line in the church of God; it fosters the misunderstandings, the self-exaltations, the hatreds of jingoistic nationalism by continuing in the body of Christ the spurious differences of provincial loyalties; it seats the rich and poor apart at the table of the Lord, where the fortunate may enjoy the bounty they have provided while others feed upon the crust their poverty affords.”<sup>8</sup>

While these racial and class distinctions in the Church are a reflection of our culture, the fact that they exist within the Church is a condemnation of the Church. The witness of the local congregation is undercut when the Gospel is denied. Jesus’ concern for the outcast and the poor, Paul’s insight that no racial, sexual or class distinctions can exist for those who are one in Christ, the impartiality preached in the Epistle of James, and the communal concerns of the Jerusalem congregation are denied in many modern congregations and denominations. The Stoic concept of the brotherhood of man has been achieved by many secular groups while the denominations lagged behind. The Church has raised up prophets such as Horace Bushnell, Washington Gladden, Henry Codman Potter, and Walter Rauschenbusch, but often their visions of what the Church ought to be died with them.

Although national leaders of denominations may offer resolutions condemning social evils, ministers on the local level have difficulty in facing the actual situations. In 1929, a long strike of millhands in Gastonia, North Carolina, found the clergy on the side of the mill owners. The ministers protected their own economic interests, lent the sanction of religion to oppose the disturbers of the *status quo*, and aligned themselves with the owners

<sup>8</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New Haven: The Shoe String Press, 1954), p. 6.

so that non-church members could not obtain jobs. They favored the current arrangements and the drastic measures of protecting them. The fact that Communists were involved confused the issues, but the anti-worker bias of the ministers was based on sympathy with the mill owners in their congregations.<sup>9</sup>

For these and many other reasons, the Churches stand under judgment. The divisions of Christendom have in many instances been examples of this judgment. The present ineffectiveness of the social witness of the Church, which is illustrated by the fact that so few listen even when the leaders of the Church speak, is another form of this judgment. The answer to this is twofold: the Churches must be reformed from within before they are the redemptive and sustaining fellowship of the Holy Spirit which is the Biblical doctrine of the Church. Even while they are concerned with their own spiritual health, the Churches must speak so that the world may hear. This means not only speaking to governments but also to the people. It means showing the courage before dictators and presidents that Paul showed before kings.

#### THE MINISTRY

American Protestantism relies primarily on its leaders for this kind of apostolic proclamation. John Bennett suggests that ministers do not provide the kind of leadership that is necessary. They do not even lead in worship. Probably "the greatest single weakness of American Protestantism is to be found in the number of local churches in which the worshiper is frustrated."<sup>10</sup> There are still too

<sup>9</sup> See Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), pp. 328-330. These ministers were not the so-called "fringe" type described among others by Ralph Lord Roy in *Apostles of Discord* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953).

<sup>10</sup> John C. Bennett, "The Limitations of the Church," in *The Gospel, the Church and the World*, ed. by Kenneth Scott Latourette (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 154; see also his *Christian Ethics and Social Policy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), pp. 89-115.

many inadequately trained ministers, even when they have college and seminary training. The preaching of today is often on a low level. Often their morale is low, and their salaries are lower. They follow the line of least resistance.

When you add some of the other limitations of the ministry and of the Church, especially in the field of Christian education, it is easy to become pessimistic. But there are glorious chapters in Church history, and it is no accident that Kenneth Scott Latourette finds that the last century was "the great century." The insights of such groups as the Frontier Fellowship are found in the local congregations.<sup>11</sup> The concern for the Bible as related to life is illustrated anew in such courses as *The Christian Faith and Life Series*. The dynamic quality of the Church as a redemptive community *now* for its members and all who may be reached, is the chief emphasis of the *Seabury Series*. The recovery of the Christian concept of the family is bringing the family-as-a-unit into the center of Christian education programs. The sense of the Church as a community within the world and with a responsibility to that world is placing the social Gospel on a different footing.

The Christian also is concerned with the place of the Church in contemporary culture, for a certain amount of political and social liberty is essential to the preaching of the Gospel. While God works through the Church when it is forced underground, a genuine religious freedom is basic to the permeation of a culture with the Gospel. There are always groups who oppose the Church, and there are more outspoken enemies of prophetic religion. Attacks on responsible clergymen and bishops because they hold unpopular views are now a possibility. The Church must always

<sup>11</sup> See *Christian Faith and Social Action*, ed. by John A. Hutchison (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), which includes chapters by Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Liston Pope, Will Herberg, John C. Bennett, Charles D. Kean, Alexander Miller, Roger L. Shinn, Clifford L. Stanley, Paul L. Lehmann, Eduard Heimann, Vernon H. Holloway, and the editor.

be on the alert to strike out against those forces which seek to subvert the Church by false accusations and restrictive measures or to use the Church for its own ends.<sup>12</sup>

#### MAN'S RESPONSE

The vocation of the Christian in the Church is to respond in faith to the grace of God vouchsafed in Jesus Christ. Depending on the situation in which he finds himself, he is to do what is demanded of him as a witness to Jesus Christ. This involves his Church membership and his *response* in the life of the Church as it faces the world. It includes his responsibility to make the institution of the Church into a fellowship of the Holy Spirit in all of its activities. His concern for prophetic religion makes him more dependent on the grace of God than on the approval of his fellows.

The response of faith also involves man's daily work. He is called to use the aptitudes that God has given him and that he has developed in the service of his fellow man. Part of the Church's mission is to make it possible for a society to use a man's real abilities for the well-being of that society. The individual must be the judge of whether his particular occupation meets these standards. No longer is there the contamination of idol worship or worship of the Emperor, but there are more subtle forces at work in many of today's jobs. Besides the forces of secularism and materialism which undercut many work opportunities, there is also a certain social snobbery in many vocational conferences for young people. They talk at great length about the ministry and other professions, with a side glance at parenthood, but say very little about the Christian opportunities of those at work in factories and mines. Alexander Miller suggests that any sound doctrine of vocation

<sup>12</sup> See "The Discovery of Resistance and Resource," in *The Church and Organized Movements*, ed. by Randolph Crump Miller (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), pp. 10-14.

should be tried on a New York taxicab driver, and he suspects that if we used the Protestant doctrines of forgiveness, justification by faith, and a calling based on real skills and social usefulness, that the cab driver would pass the test.<sup>13</sup>

The test of a Christian vocation and of Christian ethics is fundamentally in terms of loyalty, motives, attitudes, and relationships. The response of the learner or worker to the Biblical drama of redemption is in terms of obedience to the God of grace who has come to us as Creator, keeper of the Covenant, redeeming us through Christ, giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit and of community through the Church, and standing over us as Judge as we face the Consummation. The Christian learns to be loyal, to have pure motives, and to give himself to God through the decision of faith within the fellowship of the Church, as he experiences relationships with his fellows and with God by which he is redeemed from sin, is saved from being lost, is risen with Christ, and stands in the hope of resurrection unto eternal life. We stand in the middle of *Act IV* (Church) of the Biblical drama, and Biblical theology comes alive as the recital of God's mighty acts in nature and in history. Our task as educators is to confront all people of every age with the power of God revealed in the Bible and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their response is their Christian vocation.

#### COMMITMENT AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The response of faith to God's grace to which we are called applies to those of all ages. It is the child's vocation to be a child and not a little adult. It is an adult's vocation to serve the Lord

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Miller, "Towards a Doctrine of Vocation," in *Christian Faith and Social Action*, ed. by John A. Hutchison, p. 134; see also Robert L. Calhoun, *God and the Day's Work* (New York: Association Press, 1943); W. R. Forrester, *Christian Vocation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953); James A. Pike, *Doing the Truth* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1955), pp. 41-61; John Oliver Nelson, ed., *Work and Vocation* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), pp. 32-111.



as a person of mature faith and not as an immature person. It is the Church's vocation to be a channel of God's redemptive and sustaining grace.

It is difficult to be sure what a little child ought to be. It is his vocation to be himself. Too often adults expect children to follow a certain norm, and they do not allow for the variations that are part of the pattern. A child growing up in certain parts of the South may absorb the atmosphere of the heroes of the War Between the States and may often be able to think historically long before he reaches the age of ten or eleven. When history is part of the everyday thinking of a family, dates make sense to the children before they have to learn them in school. Developmental psychology can tell us what the *average* child does, but it cannot point to any child as "the average." Part of the vacillation of adolescence is that a fifteen-year-old acts like a ten-year-old at one moment and shows the maturity of an eighteen-year-old the next. Some children reach the eight-year stage when they are six, and others reach it when they are ten.

It isn't every boy's vocation to sing in a boys' choir at ten, or to be confirmed or join the Church at twelve. All girls do not get excited over the boys when they reach their thirteenth birthday. Development of the body varies with each child, and the same is true of the ability of the eyes to read. Some children learn quickly and others have to struggle with the simplest of material, although their intelligence may be about the same.<sup>14</sup>

As we face the question of Christian vocation, we come back to our "relationship theology." The child is called by God to be the child of two parents. As an infant, his development goes along certain predictable lines, depending to a greater or lesser extent on the loving and intelligent care of his parents. He has inherited

<sup>14</sup> See *These Are Your Children*, by Gladys Gardner Jenkins, Helen Shacter, and William W. Bauer (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1953), pp. 12-25; Wesner Fallaw, *The Modern Parent and the Teaching Church* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1946).

certain aptitudes that make him different from everyone else, and his vocation is to make use of these aptitudes as he grows.

#### PARENTHOOD

Closely tied in with the child's response to what God has done for him is the sense of vocation in his parents. For parenthood is a vocation. The mother accepts it normally as a full-time occupation, and it is surrounded with all the dignity that mankind has placed on motherhood from the beginning of the race. Building a Christian family is a vocation, and the mother is the key person. Therefore, even the most menial drudgery takes on dignity and sanctity. Fatherhood, likewise, becomes significant both in the rearing of the child and in providing insight into the nature of the Fatherhood of God.<sup>15</sup>

#### SCHOOL

In the United States, it is a child's right and privilege to attend school. The six-year-old's chief vocation is his experience as a first-grader. Many homes do much to prepare the child for this great experience, and good schools try to understand their new pupils against their home backgrounds. Here is where the Church can be of great help. A course that was very popular was called *Now We Are Going to School*.<sup>16</sup> It began with the problem of adjustment to life in a public school, with all of the situations facing the first-grader. At this point, the Church was an assistant to home and school in an orientation course. Then the course moved to the Church school and an understanding of why children attend. A third unit dealt with the way Jesus went to school. Fourth, there was a unit dealing with boys and girls going to school in different parts of the world. Finally, there was a unit on "Learning All the Time."

<sup>15</sup> See Basil A. Yeaxlee, *Religion and the Growing Mind* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1953), pp. 85-87.

<sup>16</sup> New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1940.

The learning process is not limited to the three "R's" or to intellectual development. The whole child is developing as a total personality, and the Gospel is relevant to all the situations in which he finds himself. His vocation includes being a member of the redemptive and sustaining community of the Church, being aware of its resources for him, and of coming to a greater knowledge of the Gospel and its promises as he lives from day to day. He accepts new responsibilities in the home and Church as his physical powers become more coordinated and he learns to work with a group in more effective ways.

#### PRIMARY

Some primary children are aware that their fathers have different kinds of occupations, and they begin to dream about being firemen, policemen, or some other attractive person. They know that Jesus had a special ministry that God wanted him to perform, but beyond this the idea of vocation is not being developed.

#### JUNIORS

Juniors continue to have the broad vocation of seeking to be a Christian in daily living. Their two chief frames of reference are the home and school and they are developing a greater sense of independence. With their historical and geographical capacities and their growing concern to know how people behave, their study of the Bible should contain an introduction to the ways in which God chooses people. God called Moses, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the disciples, Stephen, and Paul—and all of them were called and performed their tasks in different ways. Today's leaders have been called in other ways, and juniors might well become acquainted with Albert Schweitzer, Jane Addams, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Toyohiko Kagawa, William Temple, Eivind Berggrav, Charles Henry Brent, Walter Rauschenbusch, and others. Alvin Dark's practice of tithing even when his team was in the World Series, John Foster Dulles' work with

the National Council of Churches before he became Secretary of State, the devotion of the many scientists in the development of the vaccine for polio, and many such current examples should be used.

It is harder to find dramatic examples of the sense of vocation in some of the humbler tasks, but they are there. A street cleaner who began to work during the depression because he was receiving relief and thought he should show his gratitude, a barber who developed the idea of "vocational giving" by serving the Church through cutting hair, many women who sew and cook and put on sales to help those in need, are everyday examples.

When the Church school teacher feels himself called to his task, this sense of vocation is easier to communicate. Here is vocation in action, by an ordinary mortal, in relationship to pupils who can see what is happening. The concern of the teacher for his pupils is parallel to Dr. Schweitzer's concern for the natives in Africa, and this is just as much God's work that he is doing.

Most juniors could deal with several questions along these lines: What would happen if our mothers joined the C.I.O. and worked only forty hours a week? Why do workers have labor unions in order to gain benefits from their work? Is all work that has to be done pleasant and safe?

This leads the junior into another set of concerns. He is interested in social justice, and he can see the place of the Church in society. The ways in which the Church can witness to the evils of society may be tied in with the study of the Old Testament prophets. He may see the dangers of prophetic religion when ministers are examined for their political and ethical beliefs. He is concerned about law and justice rather than about the deeper dimensions of personal relationships. He wants fair play at school and on the playground, in the neighborhood, in race relations, at work, in government, and between nations.

In all of these areas, the junior is capable of passing judgment. He is beginning to have opinions about everything, and because

his sense of fairness under law is developing, he likes to use it on every event. In watching football on television, he is the first to spot violations of the rules, especially those of unnecessary roughness. He begins to understand the demand of God for social righteousness and the inevitability of judgment by God on the social process.

The junior combines the two views of vocation: he sees it in connection with his own work and the work of others, and he sees it in the broader scope of Christian witness by individuals and by the Church in the moral and social order.

#### JUNIOR HIGH

The junior-high's chief vocation is to rebel. If this seems too strong a way of putting it, it may be called the period when he learns to stand on his own feet. Sometimes during this period is the beginning of adolescence, which ties in with puberty. He is beginning to know himself as he is, to evaluate his own capacities, and to explore what he can do with his freedom. His chief question is, "Why should I?" He is trying to see the place of moral obligation in his daily decisions. He is ready to make decisions, including the major decision of selecting a master sentiment. He is willing to be confirmed or to make a profession of faith, although in some cases his decision may be to rebel against such a profession.

The changing moods of the adolescent are part of the process of growth toward maturity. He is happy and full of confidence at one moment, and despondent and doubtful about his capacities a few minutes or a day later. He may be generous and selfish, gregarious and solitary, liking a friend one day and ostracising him the next day, accepting the love of his family one day and rejecting his parents the next. He needs the resources of the Gospel during this period, but he is likely to reject it. With the need of being loved at his unloveliest moments, in his unloveliness he will reject what love is offered. Yet he is loveable and kind and sincere.

The junior-high does not have a sense of a vocation to witness



to his faith. He is too concerned with learning who he is to worry much about the health of soul of his friends. He accepts those who are like him and rejects everyone else. The best we can hope for is that he will remain loyal to the Church and bring his friends along with him. There is an element of witnessing, of course, in the enlistment of his fellows. The relationships of the gang are primary, and therefore the Church must work out a strategy for reaching the group or it will fail with the individuals.

The intermediate sometimes is ready to look at opportunities for future occupations, but normally this must wait until near the end of high school. Because of his willingness to partake in objective study, if it is interesting to him, the Biblical concept of vocation should be taught wherever it is relevant, and he may be able to apply to himself the vocational response of faith to the grace of God as he understands the Biblical drama of redemption.

#### SENIOR HIGH

The senior-high is faced with the serious question of what to do with his life. Vocation is a live and forced option. Either the choice of occupation or of college is essential. All the pressures of secular standards for making this choice are surrounding him and Christianity is likely to have little consideration in the various "vocational tests" (the title of which is a distortion of the word). He needs all the knowledge about himself, his aptitudes, and his potentialities which these tests show, and he needs intelligent guidance in terms of job openings. But if his concept of vocation is to be Christian, he needs a Christian understanding of the doctrine of work.

It is said that the Iona Community has an approach to work which is both practical and Christian. Sir George MacLeod set a visiting minister to work cleaning lavatories, and presently the visitor asked, "Why should we waste our time in doing this when there is so much that we might be discussing with profit?" Dr. MacLeod replied, "To prevent you doing what I once did—talking

about the dignity of labor!" Archbishop Cyril Garbett recounts this story, and adds, "Most work is hard, monotonous, exhausting, and uninteresting."<sup>17</sup> Too often the approach to vocation avoids this fact. Toilets do have to be cleaned and garbage has to be collected and dishes have to be washed and laundry has to be done. No matter how much we mechanize our society, someone has to run the machines.

The Christian doctrine of work recognizes it as a duty. Paul is blunt about this: "We charge you, brothers, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from any brother who lives in idleness, instead of following the teaching you received from us. For you know yourselves what you must do to follow my example, for I was not idle when I was with you; I did not eat anybody's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor I worked night and day, in order not to be a burden on any of you. Not that I had not a right to my support, but to give you in my own conduct an example to imitate. When I was with you, I gave you this rule: *'If anyone refuses to work, give him nothing to eat!'* For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ we charge and exhort such people to keep quiet and do their work and earn their own living" (I Thess. 3:6-12,G).

#### WORK

Except for the young, the aged, and those incapable of work for physical or mental reasons, it is one's Christian duty to work. This is the beginning of the approach for high school. They can see the practical reasons: to avoid starvation or dependence on others, to make a profit for one's own sake and for his family's, to serve people, to serve the nation, to serve the Church.

Man also has a right to work. The New Testament does not deal with this problem directly, because the problem had not

<sup>17</sup> Cyril Garbett, *In An Age of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 271.

arisen. Unemployment, whether it be the fault of the man or the system, causes the disintegration not only of the worker but of all those who depend on him, especially his wife. This situation exists to some degree even in times of so-called "full employment," for there are those people on the fringe of normality who are not capable of work or of the kinds of work the system makes available. The utopian ideal is that every man should be permitted to do the work of which he is capable, but no system can provide this condition and maintain the freedom that goes with a Christian society. The price we pay for freedom to choose our jobs is that many workers will be square pegs in round holes.

With universal education available through college for many youngsters, the number of choices of vocation are staggering. Robert L. Calhoun writes that the Christian approach to this choice is guided by three principles: First, a vocation is regarded "*as a systematic and persistent doing of needful work.*" There is nothing trivial about this, and much that passes for work is trivial or non-essential as far as being truly needed. Second, it is "*an absorbing, inclusive, and purposeful putting forth and development of an individual's own constituent powers.*" This is where the knowledge of one's own aptitudes is essential. Third, it "*should be a willing contributive share in the world's work and the common life.*"<sup>18</sup> Work is cooperation, or it descends to ruthless and egoistic competition. So the high-school student asks himself three questions: Is what I am doing truly needful? Does my job do justice to me? Does my work contribute to the betterment of the world in which I live?<sup>19</sup>

The Church is also concerned with the conditions under which men work. These factors include safety and working conditions,

<sup>18</sup> Robert L. Calhoun, *God and the Day's Work* (New York: Association Press, 1943), pp. 56-60; see also his *God and the Common Life* (New Haven: The Shoe String Press, 1954), pp. 53-72.

<sup>19</sup> See my *Religion Makes Sense* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1950), pp. 82-88.

hours of work, vacations with pay, job security and insurance factors, housing, special conditions for women and young people, and organizations of labor to attain better conditions. High-school young people are concerned at this point not so much because of social justice as because they themselves are about to be involved. A course such as Harold B. Hunting's *Thy Kingdom Come*<sup>20</sup> hits at these social problems for this age.

#### MARRIAGE

The other vocation to which most young people look forward is marriage and the home. Most girls expect to become mothers, and here is one of the greatest of all vocations for which there is the least training. With the lower age for marriage, an approach to this problem is essential for those in the last year of high school, and earlier in some communities. The beginning is a *theology* of marriage, an understanding of the divine order established by God. This may begin with a study of marriage in Genesis, with views of fidelity even in the polygamous marriages of the Old Testament, and continue into the New Testament doctrines in the Gospels and Paul's letters. When these relationships are translated into twentieth-century conditions, we have the basis for Christian marriage today.

The Bible sees marriage as a natural order. The family is bound together by their biological relationship. Although the three Greek words do not appear in the Biblical treatment of marriage, they may be applied here, and high-school students may easily discriminate among them. D. S. Bailey writes that marriage is based on sex love (*eros*) which seeks a permanent relationship. The consummation of marriage is sexual union, to which both parties have consented. The marriage partners also seek a mutual companionship (*philia*) which is as essential to their happiness as their sex attraction for each other. Many of the glories of family life arise from sharing interests and doing things together. Both *eros* and

<sup>20</sup> New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1951.

*philia* are controlled and enriched by self-giving love (*agape*) which asks for nothing in return. What D. S. Bailey calls the "trichotomy of love," when kept in balance, becomes the basis for Christian marriage. We say that they are made "one flesh" and marriage takes place when they become "one flesh" with the approval of the community.<sup>21</sup>

When this approach is combined with a sound sociological approach to prediction of successful marriage, especially in terms of common backgrounds and shared interests and similarity of religious faith,<sup>22</sup> the high-school youngster will be as well prepared for marriage as Christian education can make him. What is crucial is the kind of person he is, and this depends on his previous development in the Christian faith and his capacity for further growth.

#### WITNESS

The high-school youngster sees more clearly than the junior-high that his vocation is to witness to Christ. Because he is facing up to his own choice of a lifework, he is open to the ministry or other types of Christian service as a genuine decision, but he is also anxious to discover how so-called secular tasks may be ways of witnessing to his faith. The starting point is with the group and its relationships outside the Church. The admonition to Timothy is a good starting point: "Let no one look down on you because you are young, but set those who believe an example in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity" (I Tim. 4:12,G). This is difficult if it makes the young person seem *different*, for the pressure to conform to the standards of the group is the strongest power in his environment. Therefore, he needs to learn how to compromise, how to make decisions in faith within the context of the group,

<sup>21</sup> See Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *The Mystery of Love and Marriage* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), pp. 21-22, 24-30, 52. *Eros* does not appear in the New Testament, and *philia* only at James 4:4. The verb, *phileo*, occurs occasionally.

<sup>22</sup> See Ernest W. Burgess and Harvey J. Locke, *The Family* (New York: American Book Co., 2nd ed., 1953), pp. 315-442.



and to witness to his faith by leadership within the group and by drawing the group into the Church.

When the young person faces the demand of his vocation to witness to Christ, he is facing one of the great tasks that Paul understood: "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22,RSV). Just as Paul had to get along with Jews and Greeks, wealthy and poor, in order that he could be reconciled to them, so the young person has to get along with the various members in his group without selling out to them. He has to know how to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17,KJ) without confusing them. In such a crisis, the Gospel stands out as being relevant and a resource for meaningful living.

This problem of living *in* the world without being *of* the world has bothered Christians from the beginning of the Church. There is nothing new about it. If he can solve this problem on the teenage level, he is ready to face the same problem in the arena of business, manual labor, or politics. *The Address to Diognetus* says that "Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind in country or speech or customs. . . . They take part in everything like citizens, and endure everything like aliens. . . . They love all men, and are persecuted by all men. . . . To put it briefly, what the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world."<sup>23</sup>

This broad view of vocation as found in the Bible is relevant for today's living. Man responds in faith to the grace of God in Christ, and lives as a member of the community of the Holy Spirit in the world, witnessing to his faith in all that he does.

<sup>23</sup> *Address to Diognetus*, 5:1, 5, 11; 6:1. *The Apostolic Fathers*, translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 278.

## CHAPTER NINE

### CRITICISM

THE BIBLICAL theology outlined in the previous chapters and related to various age groups in order that the Biblical faith may speak to them is based as far as possible on the findings of Biblical "criticism." While the framework of the Biblical drama of redemption might be agreed upon among those who have differing views of the authority of the Biblical revelation and of historical scholarship, the particular content of the five acts has been in terms of what I believe are the findings of sound Biblical scholarship.

There is a great gap, however, between what the Biblical scholars believe and teach and what the layman and Church school teachers know about the Bible. This may be discovered in almost any adult Bible class, in most preaching, and in almost all lesson materials for Church schools. It is almost as if all the discoveries of more than a century are the private property of the scholars. This ignorance is found at its worst among those who protest the translation of a passage in Isaiah because it is inconsistent with their theory of prophecy. But the intelligent layman who is proud of his knowledge of the Bible often believes that Moses wrote the Pentateuch or that there is no difference in the historical value of the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel. Some of this ignorance is due to an unwritten conspiracy of silence on the part of clergy who should know better, but who are afraid or find it expedient not to upset the settled beliefs of their congregations. Writers of lesson materials have been timid about incorporating sound Biblical scholarship partly because of theological labels; the

“liberals” and especially the Unitarians have made such use of Biblical scholarship in their own ways that the “orthodox” are afraid to use any of it.

There has been some reason for suspicion. The striving after objective historical knowledge led to the use of the best historical methods. These methods, whether economic or political or sociological, tend to operate within the limits of naturalism. The approach to the miracles of Jesus, for example, was in terms of naturalism. If Jesus did not walk on water, there must have been a sandbar there and Peter missed the sandbar! Objectivity was confused with the presuppositions of modern history, and until the time of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* in 1910 it was supposed that Jesus could not have uttered the sayings about the end of the age.

The striving for objectivity, furthermore, often included disregard for any theology whatever, for theology was not considered part of the historian's task. In the seminaries it became possible to take a course in *Introduction to the New Testament* by studying the origins of the Gospels and Epistles, learning the dates and the historical backgrounds, and reading a bit of the Greek text. In some seminaries there was no examination in the *content* of the Bible, and courses in Biblical *theology* were unknown. The conservative seminaries, on the other hand, insisted on knowledge of the content of the Bible in the original languages, but accepted none of the findings of the historians. This false antithesis was carried over into Church school lesson materials. Either Bible-centered material was read in the King James version for its own sake, or materials that made use of historical method presented the Bible in a fragmentary way so that the Bible was referred to in little chunks in order to solve problems.

The study of the Bible might be likened to exploratory surgery. The problem was to check all arteries to their source, to distinguish between living and dead tissue, and to provide a patient whose symptoms were known objectively. Davie Napier suggests that this

was the condition of Old Testament scholarship at the turn of the century, but that some scholars became "scalpel happy" and performed in such a way as to suggest an autopsy rather than an operation. What we have is a living body of tradition, and scholarship has made clear how it functions.<sup>1</sup>

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SCHOLARS

The accomplishments of Biblical criticism were extremely significant. Even in the days when the presuppositions were naturalistic, their findings could not be ignored by anyone who wished to "be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15b,RSV). James Muilenburg summarizes the findings as follows:

Liberals and conservatives alike worked on obtaining an accurate text. The advances made since the 1611 King James version are sufficient to require considerable changes in the English translation. The establishment of an accurate Greek text of the New Testament by those expert in the original language has provided the basis for subsequent Bible study. Not much has been accomplished with the Hebrew text, and the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate the general accuracy of the text now used.

The meanings of the words and their relationships to each other has carried this study one step further.

The Biblical way of thinking has been recaptured. It is Oriental in its literary expression and thinking. The Israelites had views different from those held today concerning the cosmos, physiology and psychology, anthropology and sociology. They did not think like Greek philosophers. The beliefs of the Jews and early Christians stand in sharp contrast to the modern scientific world view. Words which had one meaning in ancient times have another connotation today.

Great advances have been made in understanding the literary

<sup>1</sup> See B. Davie Napier, *From Faith to Faith* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), p. xiv.

forms that were used. Not only the distinction between prose and poetry, but also variations within these forms are essential to an understanding of purpose.

The situation, date, and authorship provide information for understanding the setting to which the passage speaks. The Book of Revelation makes sense in the light of the persecution of the Church. The aggression of enemy countries provides a sense of urgency in some prophetic passages. The exile provides the background for the Second Isaiah.

The later interpretation or distortion of a passage is important. New Testament writers often misinterpreted Old Testament prophecies. Later theologians may have supplied new and different meanings which must be examined on their own merits. Only as we know what the original writer meant have we a basis for interpreting later exegesis.

In many cases it is possible to recapture the experience and personality of the writer, and as truth is mediated through personality, this is significant for our understanding of the text. It is important to know that Amos came from the country, that Isaiah had a vision in the temple, and that Paul had a conversion of great emotional power.

Only as we see the Bible as a whole can we understand its parts. We stand in *Act IV* (Church) of the drama, as a member of the community which has the whole Bible as its book. Professor Muilenburg adds one other factor which is missing from the writings of many earlier Biblical scholars. He says that "the interpretation of Scripture is a work of grace." The Holy Spirit guides the scholarly and the nonscholarly believer alike. "As a member of the community of the Spirit, of the Church of God where the Bible becomes Scripture by the operation of the Spirit, the reading of the Bible depends upon what the Spirit has to communicate."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> James Muilenburg, "The Interpretation of the Bible," in *Biblical Authority for Today*, ed. by Alan Richardson and Wolfgang Schweitzer (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), p. 212; see pp. 207-213.



It is out of this last point that Biblical theology has been raised up on the basis of sound Biblical criticism. The faith has been strengthened, for scholarship now stands behind the Bible's authority and gives us the basis for a more accurate understanding of its meaning. The Holy Spirit has been at work in Biblical scholarship as surely as he has guided the devout readers who through the years have captured for themselves by grace the Bible's message.

#### CRITICISM AND FAITH

John Knox has written a little book on *Criticism and Faith* which clarifies the relationship between the historical aspects of Biblical scholarship and our faith. He writes that there are certain things which we know anyhow. We are members of the Church. This community is historical and therefore must have had a beginning. It is founded on the man Christ Jesus, whom we remember and whom we know as the living Christ. This event had a significance for us: God came in Christ for the redemption of all mankind. We do not need a historian to know these things. A historian cannot help us to know it, for the knowledge is ours by the act of faith whereby we became Christians and members of the Body of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The Bible belongs to the Church. This should be obvious, but it took the historians to remind us of its proper place. When God acted to give men the Church, he gave them the Scriptures as well. The Bible can be understood in the Church because it is addressed to the Church out of which it came. It is the record of how the Church came to be, and it speaks so that the Church may be the redemptive and sustaining community that God intends it to be.

Now we come to the place where the historian has real authority. When we face the questions of what specific occurrences took

<sup>3</sup> See John Knox, *Criticism and Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), pp. 33-36.

place, what incidents under what conditions led to the writing of the Bible, what men actually did in the situations described in the Bible, when and where the events took place, who wrote the specific passages and when, and other such questions, the Christian believer is in no position to answer them. Our faith does not supply the answers to these and many other important questions. This is the domain of the historian. We are not competent to decide if the word for "young woman" in Isaiah 7:14 should read "virgin," if Moses wrote the Pentateuch, if Jesus was born in Bethlehem or Nazareth, or who wrote the Fourth Gospel. There is a difference between the words Jesus actually spoke and the record of his sayings, and scholars have come to some consensus on this ticklish point.<sup>4</sup>

The average layman is confused when he first comes up against some of these problems. But if he sees that they clarify his faith rather than threaten it, he may be more open to it. He may be confused by the way in which Biblical writers put their materials together with little thought for consistency (as in the two creation narratives). He may be disturbed by the readiness of the Hebrew mind to trace everything back to God, for Yahweh was considered the first cause behind all sorts of terrible acts. He may be annoyed by the way in which writers used other people's material, ignored the modern idea of copyright, and signed other people's names to their documents.

What happens to faith when it is discovered that John the Apostle did not write the Gospel and Epistles of John, or that Paul did not write Ephesians, or that Peter may not have written I Peter and surely did not write II Peter? While this may make a difference in our knowledge of what Jesus actually said or Paul or Peter

<sup>4</sup> See Burton Scott Easton, *What Jesus Taught* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1938), for an interesting reconstruction of Jesus' words. Martin Dibelius, *The Message of Jesus Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), presents the findings in terms of the preaching of the early Church.

wrote, it does not change the truth of the document. As John Knox reminds us, the letter to the Ephesians is both great and authentic no matter who wrote it, and its spirit is Pauline. Hebrews is not Pauline no matter who wrote it, but it stands as a presentation of the meaning of Jesus Christ. The claim of authorship arises from the ideals of the time, when using the name of another was a widely accepted practice. The purpose was not forgery, but simply the feeling that it was written in the spirit of the supposed author, and the Church was correct in accepting these writings as part of the canon.<sup>5</sup>

Rebellion is most likely to strike when the scholars work over the evidence for a "life" of Jesus. A complete biography is impossible because the four Gospels are portraits in the light of the New Testament faith in Jesus as he was remembered and believed in. Radical scholars have gone too far, and those who reduce Jesus' known life to almost nothing are rejected for two reasons: the evidence is not on their side, and the existence of the community which remembers Jesus indicates that there are some historical facts that give meaning to the act of God through him.<sup>6</sup>

While there are differences of opinion concerning what we know of the life of Jesus, most competent scholars find plenty of evidence to supply us with a picture of the man Christ Jesus and to tell us what he did and said. This is true of historians who are not Christian as well as of those who are. The primary documents are found in the New Testament, and the historian is the one qualified to handle such data. What we discover to be historically true about Jesus is significant for faith in providing the content of meaning, but it is not the whole story.

The historians and theologians are agreed that the New Testa-

<sup>5</sup> See John Knox, *Criticism and Faith*, pp. 100-104.

<sup>6</sup> See Vincent Taylor, "The Life and Ministry of Jesus," *Interpreter's Bible*, VII, 114-144, for a standard summary. See also Edgar J. Goodspeed, *A Life of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), John Knox, *The Man Christ Jesus and Christ the Lord* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941 and 1945).

ment *as it stands* gives us the *faith of the early Church*. This is a given fact. The New Testament is the Church's book, and it tells us what the Church believed and believes today about God's act in Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the founding of the Church. The revelation is found in the event as interpreted by divinely illuminated minds. The Fourth Gospel, for example, which most historians agree tells us little about the facts of Jesus' life, is an interpretation of the act of God in Christ which is a further revelation of Christ's meaning for us.

The literature of the early Church began with Paul's letters. Then came the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, more letters, Revelation, and the Johannine literature, concluding probably with II Peter. Various books appeared on lists in different localities, and some books now not listed were included. The congregation of the faithful had discovered that these books were different. They were believed to have been written by apostles, which is why II Peter got in. The true insight lying behind the insistence on apostolic authorship was that Christianity is based on an event, and witnesses to the event have authority.<sup>7</sup> The New Testament, then, has authority because it records the event and its meaning on which the Church is founded. It is the recounting of the climax of the drama of redemption, the story of *Act III* (Christ) and the beginning of *Act IV* (Church).

As a record of the mighty acts of God in history, the Old and New Testaments "contain all Doctrine required as necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ."<sup>8</sup> Everything in the Bible is not of equal value, and there are degrees of revelation in the interpretation of events, but within the Bible is the unique, final, and saving revelation of God. The Bible's authority lies with God, for it mediates the knowledge of God and his will to us.

<sup>7</sup> See John Knox, *Criticism and Faith*, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 542.

## MIRACLES

Biblical religion involves us in an understanding of the miracles. They are referred to as acts of power or mighty works, as wonders, and as signs. Since the time of St. Augustine they have been thought of not as contrary to God's laws but as contrary to what we *know* of God's laws. The supreme miracle is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it stands as evidence of the power of God, as a wonder that arouses awe and devotion, and as a sign of God's redemptive love.

It is impossible to excise the miracles of Jesus from the Gospels. He was no wonder worker, but he permitted his compassion to be put to use with the power that God gave him. He constantly warned people who sought after a sign, and yet his miracles were signs of the power that came from the Father. Chiefly they were signs that the kingdom of God had come and was coming, designed to show who Jesus was to those who have the eyes to see.

We need to see the miracles within the context of the Hebrew-Christian world view, where everything that was not clearly understood was a miracle. But chiefly we need to see the miracles from a theological viewpoint: they were "an essential part of the Gospel preaching, of which the true purpose was to awaken faith in the saving revelation of God's power towards them that believe."<sup>9</sup>

The only knowledge we have of Jesus comes from the Gospels, and within the Gospels are stories of miracles. These miracles are recounted for both theological and historical reasons, and we need to see them in both perspectives. Alan Richardson illustrates this point with familiar stories: "It may be true that we cannot state precisely what happened when Jesus encountered a hungry multitude by the lakeside or a demented outcast among the tombs, yet

<sup>9</sup> Alan Richardson, *The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), p. 19. See also, Alan Richardson, ed., *A Theological Word-book of the Bible* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 152-155.



there still remains a residuum which faith can and must affirm, that the power of God was there made manifest to those who witnessed the act of the Lord, after their eyes had been opened.”<sup>10</sup>

It is possible for the miracle stories to have theological meaning even when there is doubt of their historical probability. Many people who doubt the historical account of Jesus’ birth insist on its theological significance.<sup>11</sup> There are some who doubt aspects of the story of the resurrection such as the empty tomb episode, but they insist on the reality of the resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

As Alan Richardson says, “Each reader of the Gospels must, on the basis of his own studies and insights, make his own estimate of the historical probability of any particular episode for himself,”<sup>13</sup> but he needs the help of Biblical theology to see the significance of these stories for his understanding of the Gospel.

#### PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

An Ecumenical Study Conference, held in 1949, formulated some guiding principles for the interpretation of the Bible that bring together the findings of Biblical scholarship and the insights of Christian faith:

The Bible is the starting point. Unless God has confronted us in the Scriptures, we are not ready to listen.

“The primary message of the Bible concerns God’s gracious and redemptive activity for the saving of sinful man that he might create in Jesus Christ a people for himself. In this, the Bible’s central concern, an authoritative claim is placed upon man and he is called upon to respond in faith and obedience throughout the whole of his life and work.”

<sup>10</sup> *Miracle-Stories of the Gospels*, p. 129.

<sup>11</sup> See James A. Pike and W. Norman Pittenger, *The Faith of the Church* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1951), p. 87.

<sup>12</sup> See Frederick C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought*, pp. 227-232; Pike and Pittenger, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101.

<sup>13</sup> *Miracle-Stories of the Gospels*, p. 130.

We start our interpretation within the redemptive and sustaining community.

The center of the Bible story is Jesus Christ.

The unity of the Old and New Testaments is found in the redemptive activity of God, which means that Christians interpret the Old Testament in the light of the revelation in Jesus Christ.

We must not use allegorical interpretations to read into the Old Testament what is not there, although frequently there is a correlation between the Old and New Testaments.

The Church cannot insist on teaching that clearly contradicts the Biblical position.

In terms of specific passages, this means that

We start with an historical and critical examination of the passage, which includes: determination of the text, literary form of the passage, historical situation, original meaning of the words, understanding of the passage in terms of its total context and background.

“In the case of an Old Testament passage, one must examine and expound it in relation to the revelation of God to Israel both before and after its own period. Then the interpreter should turn to the New Testament in order to view the passage in that perspective. In this procedure the Old Testament passage may receive limitation and correction, and it may also disclose in the light of the New Testament a new and more profound significance, unknown to the original writer.”

A New Testament passage should be seen in the light of its setting and background, and then the Old Testament background should be discovered. The passage is then seen in terms of the total drama of redemption.

The Bible provides guidance for specific social and political issues and conditions as follows: “One must begin with a direct study of the Biblical text in relation to a given problem” in order to avoid the presuppositions of our own time.

Both Old and New Testament evidence should be considered. Historical differences should not be overlooked. The total Biblical message in the issue should be sought. Too much emphasis on a single passage is dangerous.

The tension between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God should be realized. A realistic ethic takes account of the possibilities open to men in their own predicament.

In applying the Biblical message to the modern world, "We must discover the degree to which our particular situation is similar to that which the Bible presents. It must be remembered that absolute identity of situation is never found, and therefore the problem of adaptation becomes acute.

"The Bible speaks primarily to the Church, but it also speaks through the Church to the world. . . . The Church can best speak to the world by becoming the Church remade by the Word of God."

There are many differences among interpreters of the Bible for all kinds of human, social and religious reasons. When Christians come together and seek to work out their problems on the basis of the Scriptures, many of these difficulties are removed. "Thus the Bible itself leads us back to the living Word of God."<sup>14</sup>

Biblical criticism, working within the community of the Holy Spirit, strengthens the authority of the Scriptures and gives us a perspective on Biblical theology which makes the resources of the Gospel meaningful for daily living. "Knowing our Bibles is not sufficient; the decisive question is whether we know the God who speaks to us and comes to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in his word in Scripture."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> "Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible," from *Biblical Authority for Today*, by Richardson and Schweitzer, 1952, The Westminster Press, adapted and quoted from pp. 240-243. Used by permission.

<sup>15</sup> James D. Smart, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 152; see also William Temple, ed., *Doctrine in the Church of England* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1938), pp. 27-35; "Authority, Scripture, and Tradition," *Religion in Life*, Autumn 1952, pp.

## CRITICISM AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Biblical scholarship stands as a challenge to Christian education. In the combination of an adequate grasp of the findings of Biblical scholars and of a theology that evolves from the Biblical revelation, some of the difficulties may be overcome. The framework of the drama of redemption, as these chapters have illustrated, makes the Bible relevant at every age. But this framework is no arbitrary device; it comes from seeing the theological implications of Biblical history as the events are clarified through adequate scholarship; it comes from seeing ourselves as living within *Act IV* (Church) of the drama of redemption, within the community of the Spirit whose book is the Bible; it comes from accepting the canons of historical study and reason as they apply to the Bible story.

The Bible is usually presented to learners in a fragmentary manner. Choice tidbits have been fed to him in isolated fashion. It may be a passage of Scripture set up for study, without any real helps from scholarship and without any relation to life. It may be a problem which has some relevance, and then the answer is magically found in a disconnected Biblical passage. No attempt is made to provide an understanding of the on-going story of the Bible. No historical background is presented, and what is studied appears in a vacuum. Even David has about the same reality as a comic strip character if all one knows is that he slew Goliath and won Bathsheba by shady methods. Many Church schools use the Bible in order to make people "good." Therefore, the characters in Bible stories are presented as moral heroes.

At an evening service, a minister read for about a half hour from the story of David, and afterwards an older woman who had known David in Sunday school as a super boy scout said, "You've

551-562. Herbert H. Farmer, "The Bible: Its Significance and Authority," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 3-31; Samuel Terrien, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible: III. Modern Period," *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, 127-141.

ruined David for me." Yet the only moral value the Bible can have is to discover through your own reading that people like yourself were ordinary sinners who were helped by God's redemptive and sustaining grace. Vacillating Peter was about as loyal and dependable as the dog "Napoleon" in one of the comic strips, and yet he is presented as a great tower of strength in many Bible stories. Later on, Peter became a pillar of the Church, but this was a development after the resurrection. The grading of most Bible stories for children of various ages has been stupid. The Bible, whether it be the Song of Solomon or the Gospel of Mark, is strictly for adults. There is no value in watered-down stories. Proper grading, when combined with an adequate relationship theology, makes the Bible relevant.<sup>16</sup>

Historical scholarship is helpful in correcting all of these errors. We see the Bible as a whole, against its historical background, with the people portrayed as the Bible portrays them. The approach to grading is in terms of the development of the child and the relevance of the Bible to the relationships he is now having. The strangeness of Oriental thinking and the distinctions of literary forms are kept in mind. Myth and legend are not presented as fact. As far as the content of the Bible is concerned, we are after *relevant quality* rather than *abundant quantity*.

#### PRE-SCHOOL

With younger children, the key to the right attitude toward the Bible lies with their parents and teachers. They learn that the Bible is the Church's book. They know that it tells us about God and Jesus. When stories are selected, the teacher tells them that

<sup>16</sup> See James D. Smart, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, pp. 144-153; A. Victor Murray, *Education into Religion* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1954), pp. 57-82; Ethel L. Smither, *The Use of the Bible with Children* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1937), pp. 13-61; Sophia L. Fahs, *Today's Children and Yesterday's Heritage* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), pp. 59-100; Lewis J. Sherrill, *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 94-106, 174-184.



the story is from the Bible. When they come to the age of fantasy, myths and legends from the Bible may be told *as such*.

#### PRIMARY

The problem does not become acute until the primary age, when some of the children begin asking, "Is it true?" By "true," they mean that the story is factual in the literal sense, that it happened just the way the story is told. While this is not as important as the relationships which are illuminated and transformed by the story and its application, it is crucial to the thinking of the child. He deserves an honest answer. He is able to distinguish between poetry and prose, between fact and fiction, between good and bad, and he wants the facts. He is willing to accept myth and legend provided they are properly labeled. He cannot see the historical sweep of the Bible as a whole and dates are still unimportant, but he should be given the background for the story or teaching that is told him.

#### JUNIOR

Juniors, as we have said previously, are ready for history and geography. They are capable of making distinctions between fact and fiction, they can discriminate between dates in the developing revelation that comes from the Bible story, and they are capable of handling many of the details of Biblical scholarship. They should know that there are two stories of creation. They should learn how the Gospels were put together. They should know the limitations of the Biblical heroes, such as David, Solomon, Peter, and Paul. They should even know that Jesus may have been mistaken in his ideas about the end of the age, the authorship of the Pentateuch, and demon possession. They should know that all the words ascribed to Jesus were not spoken by him. If this information is given along with a positive theological point of view, it will prepare them for a fuller understanding of the Bible without the heart-aches and head-aches that come with a revising of views

of the Bible during adolescence. The Fourth Gospel will retain its magnificent meaning if they know from the beginning the probable circumstances under which it was written, and this will increase their understanding of the faith of the early Church as well as their appreciation of the historical Jesus.

The dangers here are very great, but they are not as great as when we ignore these problems and hope they will be solved for them later on. The dangers are these: the teacher may not be capable of combining the critical and theological views of the Bible and therefore the factual information as well as the theological significance will be inadequate; the teacher may become enamored of the mysteries of Biblical criticism and teach only the negative side of the picture; the lack of seeing the drama of redemption in its wholeness may lead to a new type of fragmentariness, with so much time spent on one item that the Bible as a whole will be lost sight of. But this discipline of combining adequate scholarship with a dynamic and relevant theology is essential to the spiritual growth of juniors. Failure at this point is one reason why older young people reject the Biblical faith.

#### JUNIOR HIGH

Historical criticism of the Bible is essential if intermediates or junior-highs are to face the problem of science and religion. Almost all of the questions associated with evolution, miracles, the end of the world, and the meaning of history may be answered in their terms at this age. If, as we have suggested, the eighth and ninth grades are the proper time for a thorough study of the Bible, seeing it as a whole as the drama of God's mighty acts in history, this implies that at every point the findings of Biblical scholarship should be brought to bear on each problem. Within the framework of the five acts of the drama of redemption, it is possible to deal with many interesting problems. Perhaps a difficulty will occur with the story of Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea. This becomes an opportunity to see how these great stories were

put together, what the geography of the Red Sea was like, and how the deliverance from Egypt became the cornerstone of Israel's worship and of her covenant with Yahweh, for they knew that God had delivered them. This is the time to settle the problem of Jonah and the great fish and to point out the revelation of Yahweh as Lord of all mankind. The Synoptic problem in relation to the Fourth Gospel, the writing of Paul's letters against the background of the Mediterranean world, and the persecution behind the Book of Revelation can be used to bring out more clearly the relevance of the Bible for today.

One of the most interesting attempts to bring intermediates into the full community of the Church is *More than Words*, the wordbook in the *Seabury Series*. It takes over one hundred key words of Christian thinking, beginning with absolution and including acceptance, atonement, covenant, creation, death, faith, forgiveness, God, heaven and hell, Holy Spirit, justification, law, redemption, rejection, Trinity, witness. These words are explained in language that seventh-graders can understand according to the Thorndike word count and the experiences or relationships which they know. Incarnation, for example, begins with a discussion of Babe Ruth, followed by the comment, "I wish I could have known him *in the flesh*." This leads to a discussion of the fact that no one has seen God at any time, but in Christ the apostles knew God *in the flesh*. The use of such terms as acceptance and rejection ties in with the relationships of daily life. This book, therefore, when used as a resource in a dynamic discussion group, may illuminate those relationships to which the Gospel speaks for this age group, and they may recognize God's redemptive activity in their midst *now*. Furthermore, they learn the vocabulary whereby they may communicate by words with other Christians.<sup>17</sup>

It is essential that the basic assumptions of Biblical scholarship and theology be learned during the junior-high age. Senior-highs need this as background as they face their own problems, for they

<sup>17</sup> *More Than Words* (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1955).

are impatient with a straight objective approach to history and prefer to deal with the relevance of the Christian faith as they assert their own personalities. While the junior highs have crucial problems in their development of independence, they have trouble bringing their feelings and ideas into the light for public evaluation. Even in the age group, their adjustment is primarily an external one. The senior-highs, however, are now seeking to know what makes them tick, and their problems of both inner and outer adjustment are brought into the group for public consideration.

#### SENIOR HIGH

The senior-high, then, is ready for combining critical scholarship and relevant theology on a deeper level. The letters of Paul, especially Romans, I Corinthians (in part), and Ephesians (whether by Paul or not), when studied against the historical situation in which they were written and against the background of today's teen-ager, bring the resources of the Gospel into their lives. In most communities, for example, sixteen-year-olds (high-school juniors) may legally drive automobiles. They are tempted to drive too fast, take chances, use cars for necking parties, and stay out too late. Take these three passages: "I do not do the good things that I want to do; I do the wrong things that I do not want to do. But if I do the things that I do not want to do, it is not I that am acting, it is sin, which has possession of me" (Rom. 7:19-20,G). "You must not adopt the customs of this world but by your new attitude of mind be transformed so that you can find out what is God's will—what is good, pleasing, and perfect" (Rom. 12:2,G). "So as we have been made upright by faith, let us live in peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1,G). This third passage may be supported by another, "For it is by his mercy that you have been saved through faith. It is not your own action, it is the gift of God. It has not been earned, so that no one can boast of it" (Eph. 2:8-9,G). These may be read in several translations, and then their meaning worked out in terms of the



situation to which the writer was addressing himself. This conclusion should be checked against their knowledge of the Old Testament and the demands of the law. Then they may return to their original problem of how to use the family car.

Once the principle of the faith-grace relationship with God and their fellows is understood and they see the answer in terms of their membership in the community of the Holy Spirit, they are ready to make their own decisions within the context of their own problems. They make decisions, they are transformed persons, but they still have the problem of "sin which takes possession of me." The car still has a throttle which goes to the floorboard, the car still has a driver that would rather be with his friends than obey his parents, the persons in the car still have urges to neck. But now they begin to see the meaning of their situation in the light of the Gospel. They can make sense out of life, with the help that the Bible gives as the Church's Book.

One of the most successful courses for high school is *The Bible Speaks to You*, by Robert McAfee Brown.<sup>18</sup> With illustrations that are clear to high-school students, he describes how the Bible came to be written and translated, making use of the findings of Biblical criticism. He then turns to the question of revelation with Christ at the center. This sets the stage for understanding the Bible's message, the nature of man to whom God is revealed, and the hope of the world to come. This leads to a consideration of thinking Biblically about problems today. By dealing with the real problems of high-school youth from a Biblical perspective, the book draws them into a sense of the significance of the questions of real meaning in their lives.

#### TRANSLATIONS

The rise of Biblical scholarship has led to better texts in the original tongues, better understanding of the meaning of words, and better translations. A. Victor Murray still argues for the King

<sup>18</sup> Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955.



James version as the starting point, and it is surprising how many children's Bible books are selected from this masterpiece of English literature. Many of the stateliest phrases in our language come from the 1611 Bible, and it in turn is based on its Saxon inheritance going back as far as Wyclif.<sup>19</sup> But the purpose of the Bible is to tell its story in the language of the people and as accurately as possible. The American Standard Version of 1901 did much to make the English text more accurate, and the Revised Standard Version of 1946, 1952 has brought that tradition up to date. The wide sale of this version as authorized by the Churches indicates the need that it fills. Many Church schools are now using and giving to their pupils the Revised Standard Version.

Some modern translations by individuals and groups are highly recommended, especially *An American Translation* by J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed. This appears in one form with the Apocrypha newly translated as *The Complete Bible*. From this translation, Goodspeed has made selections for *The Junior Bible*, which is excellent for juniors and junior-highs, and for *The Short Bible*, which is edited with brief introductions and with the books appearing in chronological order; it appears in a Modern Library edition and is useful for all ages from junior-high up. Translations by James Moffatt and Ronald Knox (a Roman Catholic) are good for reference. The New Testament has been translated by many. Goodspeed's New Testament has been published separately and in a parallel version with the King James. J. B. Phillips' *The Four Gospels* and *Letters to Young Churches* have rather archaic introductions, but the translations are magnificent for young and old alike. There are translations by Gerrit Verkuyl, R. F. Weymouth, E. V. Rieu (only the Gospels), and others which are helpful. My own choice is one of the Smith-Goodspeed editions, but the Revised Standard Version is also excellent.

<sup>19</sup> See A. Victor Murray, *Education into Religion*, pp. 35-44.

## CONCLUSION

We learn about the Bible in the community of believers. The great sweep of history which the Bible records and interprets for us carries us into *Act IV* (Church) of the drama of redemption, and we find ourselves as members of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The culminating event of the Bible is those occurrences which center in *Act III* (Christ) with the coming of Jesus Christ, that through him God becomes reconciled with us. And this leads into *Act IV*, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the creation of the Church. This is both factual history and a response of faith as we count ourselves members of Christ's Church.

John Knox is not writing about Christian education as such, but he says this: "Whatever *knowledge* we can have of the event must be derived from our own experience in the church, from the testimony of others in the church, or from the New Testament, which is itself a record of the experience of the church at the time when the event was actually occurring or had just occurred. . . . We can know the historical event only as it is remembered and interpreted and perpetuated in the historical community."<sup>20</sup>

Although the Church is subservient to the Bible, the Church is the clue to the teaching of the Bible. Unless the local parish exhibits that quality of life which the New Testament reveals, the boys and girls in the Church will not have the New Testament revealed to them. Unless the local congregation succeeds in being a redemptive and sustaining community, although it remains a congregation of sinners, the drama of redemption will not be relevant to their relationships in the parish or outside.

If boys and girls, men and women, are going to respond in faith to the grace offered them by God through the Bible and the Church, and *therefore* are to be worthy of their vocations, the congregation must live according to the Biblical faith. The mem-

<sup>20</sup> John Knox, *Criticism and Faith*, pp. 31-32.

bers of the congregation love and accept each other, they seek to obey the law and discipline which provides a structure for their relationships, they seek that every member may grow in grace, and they are sure that they meet God in the Bible and in their worship and in their fellowship in the Church. They make use of all the findings of Biblical scholarship as a means of clarifying the Biblical story, and they see God's hand beneath the surface of all occurrences. But chiefly they know that they are justified by faith, and that through grace they are what they are, and they face the consummation with hope rather than fear.

“For God created man for immortality,  
And made him the image of his own eternity,  
But through the devil's envy death came into the world,  
And those who belong to his own party experience it.  
But the souls of the upright are in the hand of God,  
And no torment can reach them” (Wis. of Sol. 2:23-24; 3:1,G).

## BOOKS TO READ

### ON BIBLICAL THEOLOGY:

Bernhard W. Anderson, *Rediscovering the Bible*. New York: Association Press, 1951.

This book approaches the Bible in a manner consistent with our major purpose. It is clear and helpful.

John Wick Bowman, *Prophetic Realism and the Gospel*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955.

God's meaningful and creative activity as Lord of history is described in vivid terms.

John Bright, *The Kingdom of God*. Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953.

The theme of redemption runs through the Old and New Testaments, with the idea of the Kingdom of God as the main link.

Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952.

A careful treatment of two themes in the drama of redemption.

Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953.

A little book of great power that treats the New Testament Church as a fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

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